



DURGA SAH
MUNICIPAL LIBRARY
NAINITAL

दुर्गा साह म्युनिसिपल पुस्तकालय
नैनी ताल



Class no 642
Book no C 81 R
Reg no 7705

DURGA SAH

This book, for all other epicures, contains sections on wine, food, cigars and cigarettes. Major Cunynghame has drawn on a long lifetime of good living, and these entertaining reminiscences of past and present delights are fascinating and contain much valuable information, combined with amusing anecdotes.

The author, who has kept a wine cellar for many years, knowledgeably discusses the vintages of the past and present, including Sherries, fine Burgundies, Sauternes, Ports and many other wines. Major Cunynghame gives much useful information on present-day easily available wines.

The section on good food contains original recipes, many of which the author has himself evolved. These are mostly easily and economically prepared. Chapters include hors d'œuvres, savouries, delicious and unusual sweetmeats and preserves, and cheeses. Major Cunynghame makes useful suggestions for catering for unexpected guests, and for surprising snacks that can easily be made at home and served at cocktail or sherry parties. He lived for some years in America, and has travelled widely elsewhere; there is a chapter on American specialities. Not the least interesting chapter is a remembrance of a dinner in Soho in 1905.

In the final section the author discusses his own likings and experiences with fine tobacco. There is remembrance of the Havana Cigars of the past, but also of other cigars and cigarettes more easily obtainable today.

REMINISCENCES
OF AN
EPICURE

*Other books by
the same author*

CHLORIS AND ZEPHYRUS
A poem in rhymed iambics

COLLECTED POEMS

THE TRAMP OF THE YOUNG MEN

LOST TRAIL
The Story of Klondike Gold



DELICACIES

*All food dishes reproduced on this photograph were prepared in the kitchens of
Fortnum & Mason Ltd.*

FRANCIS CUNYNGHAME

REMINISCENCES
OF AN
EPICURE

PETER OWEN LIMITED

London

PETER OWEN LIMITED
50 Old Brompton Road
London SW7

Durga Sah Municipal Library,
NAINITAL.

दुर्गासाह न्यूनाईटल नैनीताल

Class No.

Book No.

Received on

642
C 81 R
August 64

Printed in Great Britain by
JOHN BUCKLE (PRINTERS) LIMITED
Theatre Plain, Great Yarmouth
Norfolk
MCMLV

CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
WINES	9
FOOD	83
SMOKES	141

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In writing this book of good Food, better Drinks and the best of Smokes, I am setting down the experiences gained by keeping a cellar and a record of the good things in it for nearly forty years, hoping that they may interest those who may have done the same and wish to compare notes, and may be some guide to others who wish to carry on the good tradition.

In the same way I have recorded some personal essays in concocting the things that accompany good wine, not omitting a memory of those Havana cigars that belonged to an earlier age, and have now come back—in small quantities and big prices—to remind us that crops still ripen in the Vuelta de Abajo.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Messrs. W. & R. Chambers, Ltd., for the kind permission to include in this volume the description of a Dinner in Soho, which I wrote and which appeared in "Chambers' Journal" in August 1905.

F. C., 1955.

All food dishes reproduced on the coloured frontispiece were prepared in the kitchens of Fortnum and Mason Ltd., Piccadilly, London, W.1., whose co-operation in providing all the material for the photograph is gratefully acknowledged by the publishers.

W I N E S

“That nectarian, delicious, precious,
heavenly, joyful and deifick liqueur”.

Rabelais.

CHAPTER 1

' Know, my Beloved, that by wine we become Divine '

It is assumed that you know something about drinking wines.

You are, shall we say, aspiring one day to be fit company to sit with Dr. Middleton and Sir Willoughby Patterne, being of course a little overawed by their profound wisdom and the thought that the latter could have in his cellar so many as fifty dozen of that old Port from which the Doctor could not drag himself away.

I am not therefore going to attempt to emulate other books on wine, which describe how a wine is made, and what the different vines and grapes may be that made it. This proposes to be just a conversation-piece, reminiscential about the wines and the vintages and other things we know, and comparing notes with those of others who have loved and known the same wines.

Monsieur de Talleyrand said: "First you caress your glass with the palm of your hand so as to warm it. Next you rotate the wine gently in order to liberate its bouquet. After that you take it to your nose to inhale its fragrance, and hold it to your eye to admire its fine colour. And then . . . you put down your glass again and begin to talk".

Et puis on cause!

Good wine always seems to me to be one of those things that belong to mature age and not to youth. You remember with somewhat ribald feelings the solemnity with which in your youth the old Claret was carefully held to the nose, gently swirled in the glass and a sip taken and rolled round the mouth; and when that had been done, the boring silence was broken by some garrulous old boy saying with rapturous expression: "Ah-h-h, Susie". And Susie would answer him: "Yes, Jimmie, that is one of the last of the"—thirty, forty or fifty dozen . . . And Jimmy would reply: "Your father,

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Susie, was a wonderful man"—and so on, and so on, ad infinitum.

And all the time you longed to get away to much more plebeian delights. That good old bottle of Beaune—if it was Beaune—in the restaurant with your friends in London, monstrously warmed and shaken by the waiter, and tossed down to the strains of 'Hitchy Koo' by the grill-room orchestra, was worth a dozen or two of the other. You would have agreed then with that dear old silly Henry Rycroft of George Gissing, who said of wine: "To get good of them, soul's good, you must be on the green side of thirty". Rubbish. It is true that, unless you had something internally wrong with you, you would in your youth have enjoyed those 'heady' wines—new full-bodied Burgundy, a thick Andalusia from Spain, or a bottle of that old Melbonia we used to know as our favourite Australian brand, and you would not scruple to follow it with a vile port and the devil of a *crème-de-menthe*.

No, the gods have provided the great wines for the middle-aged and maturer man, and as a solace for the loss of lighter and more ephemeral joys.

I suppose it is rather nostalgic to think back to those pre-*phylloxera* years, or even to the Edwardian days when you could stock your cellar with quite first-class wines and never needed to exceed in price some 66s. for a dozen of the best—when, as Mr. McQueen-Pope, that looker-back to nostalgic remembrances of the theatre and music-hall, reminds us: "You got a crate of beer for 1s. 3d., and the West End was still the West End".

Not every joy in life passed away when all the lights in Europe went out on that fateful day in August 1914. There were still servants in our houses when the last 'all-clear' sounded in 1918, and there were still dinner-parties in the old style, and Professor Saintsbury was with us and writing his masterpiece of wine-lore, and we were still laying down Port, Burgundy and Bordeaux in such cellars as we possessed.

To show how we did ourselves well in those days, and

Wines

could eat good meals of eight courses and mix good wines, I will give the menus of two little dinners which we gave at our London home in the early twenties.

10th May, 1921.

In the drawing-room before dinner, caviare on small round croutons of toast, served with Tio Pepe.

Menu

Crème artichaut
Saumon, sauce Hollandaise
Tournedos charbonnier
Poulet grillé au diable
Asperges
Bombe au Madère macedoine
Soufflé de fromage
Glace moka
Dessert

Wines

Tovey's old Bristol Sherry 1865
Rudesheimer Schlossberg Auslese 1911
Louis Roederer, Extra Sec 1911
Sandeman 1896
Chateau Cos d'Estournel 1893
Imperial Tokay Bisquit Dubouché
Essenz 1906 1865

15th February, 1922.

In the drawing-room before dinner, caviare on small round salted biscuits, served with Natural Dry Oloroso.

Menu

Consommé Royale
Filets de Soles truffés au Cardinal
Noisettes de veau Godard
Poulet à la Creme
Gateau Riviera
Pudding glace moka
Aigrettes de fromage
Dessert

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Wines

Tovey's Light Pale Bristol 1874

Rudesheimer Berg Riesling 1915

G. H. Mumm 1911

Sandeman 1896

Very old Pale Madeira

Chateau Malescot 1899

Dennis Mounie 1875

*

Two facts arose at the end of the War in 1918 which rather altered the conditions of laying down large stocks of wine. The first was the growing tendency to live in 'flats', where there was no cellar, no possibility of maintaining an even temperature, and where lack of space foiled the gathering together of a large quantity. This resulted in wine merchants announcing that they would 'house' the wines you purchased from them under the proper conditions, and then just deliver to you what you wanted when you wanted it. No chance for Dr. Middleton there!

The other factor was the custom of not buying more than a dozen or two of any particular brand. The shock to the world's nervous system caused by the first European War made people feel that large stocks were an anomaly in an unsafe world. I myself found that the old bins were therefore rather useless, and I got a carpenter to divide them up with extra timber shelves and uprights so as to hold a dozen or two only of each variety. And I would divide a big cellar into two, one for the red wines and the other for the white—actually an ideal arrangement—with a peep of gas a foot from the floor kept perpetually alight in the 'red' cellar in order to maintain an even slightly warmer temperature.

All those good people who write books of advice to the novice in wine-keeping refer to the necessity of the good wine-merchant and to taking his advice. A 'good wine' is a good wine if it suits your particular palate, and it will not necessarily be good because it suits that of another person, be

Wines

he ever so mindful of the goods he sells. Rely therefore by all means on your good friend the wine-merchant, but rely much more firmly on your own judgement, and learn to exercise it.

It was my practice, always, before buying, to have a sample or two first—on my wine-merchant's recommendation or by careful analysis of his wine-list—and then after laying it down for a short while I would try the bottle and if it pleased me I would place an order. This practice has been somewhat nullified since the last War by finding, on going back to my wine-merchant after careful sampling, that the wine I had decided to buy had got suddenly sold out, so that either I had to take wine 'on spec' or rely entirely on the seller.

An old friend of mine of long ago who loved good beverage wine, had one panacea for 'blind' buying which he declared was infallible. "This is how you should buy", he said, "and what you buy will be good enough for you to drink every day and sound enough to give your friends if you keep it long enough to mature. When you go to your wine-merchant or you go out to dine, the same rule applies, and you will find that by adopting my rule you will save pennies and pounds. The wine-merchant or restaurateur puts the best wine for the money which he is selling always the second cheapest on his list. Do not therefore on any account buy the cheapest, always the next one to it, and you will never be disappointed. This refers to Bordeaux Red, and White, Burgundy Red and White, Hocks and Moselles".

A debatable question is that of half-bottles. If there is only yourself, and perhaps another to think of, you very often find that a full bottle is too much, so you put the cork back into the bottle and bring it out again the next day. To some wines, white especially, this is fatal, and even the red wines suffer a malaise, however slight it may be. When opening my bottle on the next day I have always remembered and felt most sympathetic towards the Great Napoleon who owing to scarcity of shipments had to keep his bottle over. Of all the most

Reminiscences of an Epicure

ignominious acts that a Frenchman could endure this surely must be the most intolerable. The wretched state of affairs was, it is said, subsequently remedied by Sir Hudson Lowe.

The alternative to having to use the bottle twice lies of course in buying half-bottles. This however has its disadvantages, not only because it costs one shilling more for every couple of half-bottles, but one always has the feeling that wine out of the meagre half-bottle never matures so well as it does in the larger whole bottle. The ideal size for general use has always seemed to me to be the litre and the half-litre—neither too big nor too small—which we are accustomed to see in flasks of Chianti and in the out-pourings of Australian flagons.

Whilst on the subject of bottles, the magnificent bottles in which Champagne is, or was, bottled, are worth recounting, and they are interesting to remember. There are few people who can name the complete list.

Magnum	equal to 2 bottles		
Jeroboam	„	4	„
Rehoboam	„	6	„
Methuselah	„	8	„
Salmanazar	„	12	„
Belthazar	„	16	„
Nebuchadnezzar	„	20	„ or 3½ gallons.

One must not assume that the greatness of these Champagne bottles is due to any desire to obtain mellowness in maturing, but a magnum of Chateau-bottled Claret—Chateau Cheval Blanc or Chateau Haut Brion—such as one could obtain easily in the old days, was well worth buying and keeping for some far-off occasion. Was not one of the most sublime acts of creation a magnum of that superb wine, Chateau Margaux, the best Bordeaux of the year 1900—that glorious year in which the sun shone magnificently, when the Prince of Wales won the Derby with Diamond Jubilee, when Rosie Boote sang her last great song and ‘San Toy’ with Marie Tempest and a bevy of stars filled Daly’s Theatre every night to overflowing.

Wines

And now, having talked about bottles, what about glasses? In the first place all glasses for drinking wine should be pure white crystal glass, because the glorious colour of the wine, before yielding its bouquet and its flavour, is one of the glories of God. The best cut-glass sets of table-ware made in Victorian days were eminently sensible, the big generous glasses for Claret and Burgundy, the smaller for port, the narrow-shaped for sherry, and the flatter large-rimmed glasses for champagne. They made a brave showing on the white damask of the table-cloth or the bare mahogany.

There were none suitable for Hock and Moselle, so when Edwin and Angelina took that trip down the Rhine the year after they were married they brought back with them a set of those gawdy elaborate coloured glasses on tall stems that were going to play havoc with their scheme of table decoration. Tall, plain glasses for Rhine wines on green or amber stems and bases look very nice and on a summer day serve to make the wine inviting, but the bowl of the glass must be plain white glass so as not to mask the colour, and they should for preference have a rim that slightly curls outwards.

I do not know what unorthodox thing to say about the tulip-shaped glasses sold for fine red wines, which we are told are *de rigueur* for enhancing the bouquet. If made of very fine thin glass and that tulip-business is not too pronounced, we will not quarrel with the dictum, but I cannot see what is wrong with a fine large bowl-shaped glass holding about half-a-pint in which to drink one's best Clarets and Burgundies. The same remark applies to the port glass, but smaller, in which all dessert wines should be drunk including all medium and rich dessert Sherries. I like to keep my narrow Sherry glasses purely for dry Sherries—Manzanilla or Montilla. As for Champagne, give us all the time the old hollow-stemmed glasses which keep active the mousse of the sparkling wine, though some more ordinary glasses are made with a pinpoint in order to achieve partly the same result.

Two of the pleasantest glasses I have for drinking are old

Reminiscences of an Epicure

crystal, and their duplicates can be picked up to-day in the antique shops. For Claret, the glass is plain, straight, V-shaped, the V being about two and a half inches high standing on an inch and a half stem, with a diameter of three inches across the top. The Burgundy glass is a fine and thin engraved glass with a generous round bowl tapering inwards gently and then opening outwards at the top with a broad lip. This latter glass we have found very satisfactory also for old Cognac.

As for a lot of coloured glass that used to pour in before the War from Czecho-Slovakia and could be bought quite cheaply at Woolworths, these made very good cocktail glasses and looked nice with a cherry-on-a-stick inside them, so if you want to indulge in those fancy articles, which you may have received as a wedding-present, use them by all means for cocktails but not for wines, and if they are large and tumbler-like use them for John Collins or something of that sort. Even a good Scotch whisky likes plain glass.

Experiments have been tried in drinking claret in a dark blue glass with a white rim, and there are those who have pronounced in favour of it. When taking a bottle of claret or Burgundy for lunch on a picnic or when motoring, it is not a bad idea to use small white opaque glass tumblers for it, and it seems to go well, and I must say that I sometimes envy the lady in a song from the 'Country Girl' who used to "drink Champagne in a tumbler and thought it was rare good sport". One never seems to get a big enough drink of it from an ordinary Champagne glass.

Has the controversy of decanting, or not decanting, ever been settled? Cradles are an abomination, and someone always receives the nearly-last of the bottle with some of the dregs. But careful decanting has never in my experience done any harm to the most delicate of Bordeaux wines. I make a practice of bringing up my wine to 'chambre' it for at least ten hours in a temperature in winter a little warmer than the dining-room, standing it upright. Then an hour before dinner, having gently warmed the decanter, I place myself comfortably

Wines

grasping the bottle at its base, in front of a lighted candle (not electric light) and pour it gently into the decanter and stop immediately before the slightest dreg gets to the neck of the bottle. Then I leave the decanter unstoppered until it is served so as to allow the wine to 'breathe'. A perfect wine, from behind the faggots, is the result.

A curious difference exists in the way of binning wines between the wine-merchant and the amateur. The wine-merchant always bins his wine with the base of the bottle to the front; it must be conceded that what the merchant does is correct. The average householder bins his wine with the cork showing. I think that the reason is an aesthetic one and lies in the fact that the different coloured capsules give a cheerful effect. By the amateur the bottles are also more easily handled that way.

Another thing that creates interest and enquiry in the mind of the amateur cellarman is the matter of cobwebs! I knew someone who introduced a spider to his wines in the hope that he would do the right thing by the Port he had laid down, and make it nice and cob-webby. All the books tell you, and so will your wine-merchant, that scrupulous cleanliness is essential in your cellar. Why then when you go to your wine-merchant in the City are you handed over the counter a bottle of some old special Port which has the dust and dirt of ages on it? And could you not imagine your consternation, on asking the wine-waiter at a hotel to decant a very old Port or Claret for you, to find yourself presented, as evidence that what you had ordered is what you had got, with a bottle spick-and-span and clean and shiny as if it had just come from the manufacturer?

The other day a columnist in one of the London newspapers was giving his, or her, readers some ideas as to choosing wines to furnish a wine-cellar to-day, and to those who may be thinking in these times of high prices and penury how to set about it, a few ideas may not come amiss.

I will start by assuming that for ordinary purposes some

Reminiscences of an Epicure

twelve dozen would be ample, and I would allocate these on somewhat the following lines.

BOTTLES AND
HALF BOTTLES

Red Beverage wines

Bordeaux (Claret)

- 6 bottles of a Chateau-bottled wine (for very special occasions)
- 2 dozen bottles of good Chateau claret bottled in England, of a good vintage (for laying down)
- 1 dozen bottles of an inexpensive Chateau or ordinary claret (for drinking now and good enough to give to guests)
- 1 dozen $\frac{1}{2}$ bottles (for your ordinary use) 54

Burgundy

- 6 bottles of Grands Vins of Vintage years (for special occasions)
- 9 bottles of good Beaune or Beaujolais (for ordinary drinking) 15

Rhone

- 3 bottles (for ordinary drinking) 3

Odd red

- 1 dozen $\frac{1}{2}$ bottles of South African or Australian 'Burgundy' or Chianti, etc. (for ordinary drinking) 12
- 84

White Beverage wines

Bordeaux

- 3 bottles of a Chateau Sauternes (for special occasions)
- 6 bottles of Graves (for ordinary drinking) 9

Burgundy

- 3 bottles Chablis, etc. (for ordinary drinking) 3

Wines

Anjou		
3 bottles (for ordinary drinking)	3	
Hocks, Moselles or Alsace		
6 bottles (for ordinary use)	6	
Odd White		
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ bottles of South African 'Hock' or 'Sauterne'		
type (for ordinary drinking)	6	
	—	27

Sparkling

3 bottles of Vintage Champagne (for special occasions)		
3 bottles of Non-vintage Champagne (for more ordinary occasions)	6	

Dessert

Port		
3 bottles of Vintage (not less than 20 years in bottle—for special occasions)		
3 bottles of Tawny or ruby, or 'Colonial' port-type (for ordinary drinking)	6	
Sherry		
2 bottles of Dry: 2 of Medium: 2 of Dessert	6	
Odd dessert		
3 bottles of South African Sherry-type and		
3 bottles of Malaga, Frontignan, Commanderia, all cheap (for ordinary drinking)	6	
	—	18

Aperatif

1 bottle of Dry (French) Vermouth (for cocktails)	1
---------------------------------------------------	---

Spirits

2 bottles of Whisky	2
2 bottles of Gin	2
1 bottle of Very old Cognac (for special occasions)	
1 bottle of Good Brandy (for medicinal use in the house)	2

Reminiscences of an Epicure

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ bottles of Liqueurs (Cointreau and Curacoa are most useful for cocktails or cups)	2	
	—	8

TOTAL: 12 dozen bottles and half-bottles.	144
Approximate cost £75.	—

The above can of course be varied to suit individual tastes, but I beg any one who starts a cellar not to reduce in the Claret. "If God forbade drinking, would he have made this wine so good?"

CHAPTER 2

The Bordelais

Said Keats: "How I like Claret! When I can get Claret, I must drink it. 'Tis the only palate affair that I am at all sensual in . . . It fills one's mouth with a gushing freshness, then goes down cool and feverless; then, you do not feel it quarrelling with one's liver. No; it is rather a peace maker, and lies as quiet as it did in the grape".

Most books on Claret start off by panegyrics about the *Premiers Crus Classés*—the Big Three and their runner-up 'Ho Bryen' as Pepys knew it. Instead of that I propose to start at the bottom of the scale and end on the high note, as anyone singing the praises of the greatest wine in the world should do.

We will talk therefore about simple *Vin Ordinaire*. It is after all the Claret we can afford to drink, and on that account it is important. *Vin Ordinaire* from Bordeaux comes to England where it is bottled and put up for sale about four years old, when it passes as a clean fresh and pleasant beverage wine, not possessing as a rule very much flesh on its bones. In the old days we bought it at 24/- a dozen or less, and it sufficed for ordinary drinking. In Monsieur Brice's restaurant in Old Compton Street fifty years ago he followed French fashion and a half-bottle was included without extra charge in the six-course dinner for two shillings, and it was drinkable, and sixpence was allowed on it if you chose to take a dearer wine on the wine-list. Cheaper even than that it was of course in France itself, and in every hotel it was—and still is—on draught. But what a different article! Only a matter of twenty miles across the Straits of Dover, and you have it in your little hotel, alternative to cider on draught, or on the train, or at the buffet in Paris, and your cheap bottle at once opens up a whole vista of new flavours, and like that first cup of real Parisian *café-au-lait* with a brioche or croissant, the

Reminiscences of an Epicure

first glass of ordinary red wine on French soil is nothing less than marvellous.

In these merry days something that calls itself simply 'Medoc' or 'St. Emilion'—a step above a Vin Ordinaire pure and simple—is at least 78/- a dozen for a dependable wine, and I suppose the thing to do is to import a cask of it yourself and bottle it. I once bought several dozen of the best wine-of-all-work from a doctor—Claret, Burgundy and Graves. He said he had bottled it himself, using any old corks which he had apparently shortened down, ramming the corks well home with about half an inch protruding from the top of the bottle; no capsules or scaling-wax. He had had them some years in his cellar and was now going abroad. There was not a bottle of bad wine in the lot, and the Graves was very dry and especially good.

When you buy these cheaper wines from a wine-merchant, you can generally depend upon anything that calls itself 'St. Estephe', but I have looked askance at a bottle labelled 'St. Julien'—a name that has been much abused. A St. Emilion is also usually good, but though characteristically full-bodied it is more often than not rather flavourless. A step higher up—Côtes de Bourg and Graves de Portets appear very often in English wine-lists and are recommendable, but a buyer should test his own palate before buying, since a wine-merchant to-day may not have for disposal more than one or two of these cheaper wines, and how can he then recommend you what to have?

As you go up the scale, the vast world of Bourgeois wines opens up before you, many of them the equal of and better than the classed wines. Of these Chateau Laujac, a vineyard to the far North of the Medoc, has been consistently one of the best. Its price to-day is around 114/- a dozen as against 32/- a dozen pre-war. It has always had a very pronounced flavour and outshines several of the third and fourth growths. Listrac is another name worth looking out for, a very big, full, vinous wine from the Medoc. A St. Estephe Bourgeois

Wines

growth that has had a considerable market here and is light but distinctly flavoury is Chateau Capbern. An interesting wine and one that used in old days to be very cheap is Chateau Angludet from Cantenac. It was once upon a time a classified Fourth Growth, but ceased to be classed at the time of the last Official Classification owing to its being divided amongst several owners. It is noted for being planted with a rare species of vine called the *Carmenère*, the vine-stocks of which, it is said, survived the phylloxera.

Grand Pontet 1937, a St. Emilion wine, full-bodied and very soft and suave on the palate has been obtainable lately at 114/- a dozen, as well as some more of the 1937 wines, just past their best. Chateau Citran, pre-war 22/6d. per dozen, is another Cru Bourgeois Supérieur from the Medoc which has always had a particularly high reputation, its 1928 vintage showing even in that wonderful year a superiority over many of the classified growths. This Chateau was owned by the Royalist family of the de Donnissans, the last of whom was killed in the Vendéean rising of 1793. The writer's own great-grandfather, the Baron Francois de Mallet, commanded the Royal troops in La Vendée at the conclusion of those hostilities, and I used to bin this wine with a sort of family affection for it.

Of St. Emilion wines that I have binned was Domaine de Pavie 1906, and it is starred with a double asterisk. It was a particularly rich wine and was one of the first I had had in any quantity. I also had some of the 1911 Vintage—both good years—and again this was a rich wine but a little lacking in flavour. Maurice Healy mentions the Pavie of 1912 which was only a fair year and names it amongst his 'loves' and laments the fact that he had not tasted a sample of a more orthodox year. A St. Emilion that has lately given much pleasure has come from a small vineyard—Chateau La Tour St. Christophe, the owner of which does his own chateau-bottling, a soft and flavoury wine of 1943 at only 102/- a dozen—full bodied, though the wines of that year were gener-

Reminiscences of an Epicure

ally light. Curiously enough both the Chateau Cheval Blanc and the Chateau Ausone of 1945 have proved disappointing.

Amongst the Graves, I had in my cellar a dozen each of Chateau Smith Haut Lafite 1928 and Chateau Pape Clement 1929—though both of these were outstanding years, I do not recall their coming up to the various Medocs of the same years. And so we arrive at the portals of the Great.

The first of the classed wines that I ever possessed was a Chateau Cos d' Estournel 1893. I was lucky, for as M. André Simon says of this vintage it was magnificent, and Professor Saintsbury says they were the last wines he possessed and "really rejoiced in". The grapes that year were all uniformly sound and ripe and all wines were good.

My next entry is Chateau Malescot Saint-Exupery 1899, a wine of Margaux with an absolutely transcendent bouquet. Anyone who has met Chateau Malescot and of a great year, such as 1899 especially, will not easily forget the wonderful aroma. When the cork was drawn and when the wine was decanted, it seemed to fill the room, and in the heyday of one's youth it was an experience one does not forget. Curious that Maurice Healy makes no mention of ever having had this Bordeaux, but I think it is comparatively rare in England.

What a pair of wonderful years they were—1899 and 1900. I bought in 1920 the Chateau Malescot—it was already an old wine, and as I only started my cellar at the end of the War in 1918, I had not any of the 1900s. There has always been some controversy between Claret-lovers as to the respective merits of the two years. Better than anything I ever had was Chateau Margaux 1900, with which I regaled a friend at the Holborn Restaurant in 1919. He said to me: "This is an extraordinarily fine claret you are giving me; what is it if I may ask?" I told him, and no wonder I have looked back upon that wine as about the most perfect I have had. M. André Simon says both the '99 and 1900 Margaux "were perfect bottles, but the verdict was that the 1900 had just that little more gracious or sweeter finish which entitles it to be called

Wines

the better of the two in September 1934 I had quite as fine if not an even more remarkable bottle of Margaux 1900 in Paris".

My 1911's included that Chateau Grand Puy Lacoste against which I had recorded two asterisks. It is a fifth growth, but has a big reputation for never letting a buyer down. The 1911's did not age well, but when not too old were stout and dark and full of health and goodness. We must have drunk it before it had had "ten in the bottle and two in the wood" because we left London for New York—and prohibition—in 1922. So we no doubt drank it at its best.

I see that I had a Chateau d'Issan 1913 and I had marked it with one asterisk, which shows that it was gratefully appreciated. This is particularly interesting as M. André Simon says "I can't remember any 1913's that gave me any real pleasure to drink". In 1914 there was Chateau Latour and in 1917 Chateau Leoville Barton and Chateau Margaux. The 1914 was only a fair vintage and went off rapidly. The 1917's did not even have that qualification, yet they were much trumpeted in England, but as Morton Shand says he never met a single specimen that was not harsh or poor. Hence one's extensive buying on trade advice, and the fact that their memory made no lasting impression. I must have bought them on my return from America in 1924.

We now come to a series of exceptional vintages—1920, 1923, 1924, 1928 and 1929. I laid down of the 1920's Chateau Latour, Chateau Lafite and Chateau Leoville Poyferré—about my three favourite Bordeaux. "The best Medoc of 1920 was without doubt the Chateau Latour"—an opinion shared in by Maurice Healy who referred to it as "far and away the best wine of that year". We finished the last bottle in 1939 just before the War, and it was indeed a 'taffatas' wine, full-bodied, smooth, like liquid velvet. The Lafite was more fruity, and the Leoville Poyferre—somehow I liked it best, but then I have always been a lover of the Leovilles.

In 1923 Chateau Citran—an outsider—held pride of place,

Reminiscences of an Epicure

and I had also Chateau Gruaud Larose Faure, King Edward VII's favourite Claret.

In 1924 there were five, of which Chateau Cantenac Brown was far and away the best—always a delightful and most beautifully balanced wine and keeping up its reputation now in the 1945's and 1947's vintages. The other four were Langoa Barton, Pichon Longueville, Gruaud-Larose-Sarget and Marquis d'Alesme Becker, the last a third growth, a Margaus, which is seen little in England and of which I had more than the usual quantity, chateau-bottled. No one particularly seems to mention this wine, but I found it very soft and pleasant and it was extraordinarily cheap at only 48/- a dozen.

We then come to the debatable 1928's and 1929's. Unfortunately the War coming in 1939 made me get through my wines rather quickly, buying no new ones, so that I never had these wines at their best. I had fourteen 1928's and ten 1929's. The 1929's matured earlier, and it is a sore point that I did not keep my Mouton Rothschild which to-day is worth its weight in gold, the biggest, darkest and most full of all the wines of that year. Chateau Beychevelle, always one of the most popular Clarets was, next to Mouton Rothschild, the loveliest of the 1929's. I had also, amongst others, Leoville Poyferré and Pontet Canet. The 1928's which were at first hard and slow in maturing, but which became the best stayer of the two years, included Latour and Batailley, a Fifth growth, the latter not particularly known in England but a beautifully delicate and well-poised wine. I had also Mouton d'Armailhacq and Gruaud-Larose-Sarget, Le Prieuré—another not much known Fourth growth—Cantenac, Langoa Barton, Leoville Lascases, Pichon Longueville, and an outsider—always a very fine one—Chateau Coutet.

In 1937 at one of Messrs. Berry Bros.' charming luncheons we sampled four of the 1933's—Latour, Rauzan Segla, Cheval Blanc and Beychevelle. I was particularly attracted by the Beychevelle, a favourite with many people, and bought half a cask for laying down. Unfortunately it did not turn out a

Wines

very good year, and before the war I disposed of most of what I had of it. The year 1934 produced some fine wines of which I only finished my Chateau Langoa a short time ago. Of the 1937's, the last of the good pre-war Clarets, I still hold Gruaud-Larose-Sarget and Pichon Longueville and a good deal of St. Estèphe, an ordinaire which is very satisfactory, but they will probably not hold good for very much longer. The 1943's were all light wines, but very flavoury, and I have still some Chateau Latour to look forward to.

The wine to buy now and for some time to come—when you can get it—is of course the 1945's. The wine-merchants recommended to me amongst the lower-priced wines Ducru-Beaucaillou—always a lovely clear and 'pebbly' wine—Pontet-Canet, Léovilles Lascases and Poyferré, Gruaud-Larose, Batailley, Haut Bages; and amongst the barbarians, Plince (Pomerol).

Before closing this talk on Claret, there is one matter which I think will be of interest.

I took the trouble once to analyse the Chateau wines which Professor Saintsbury mentions in his 'Notes from a Cellar Book' as having from time to time had in his cellar, and to compare them with those Chateau Clarets which I had myself binned over many years. This is his list of the different growths in the order of the number of times he binned them, which may be taken as a record of his preferences:

- Chateau Margaux
- „ Beychevelle
- „ Lafite
- „ Langoa
- „ Mouton Rothschild, Palmer
- „ Larose, Pape Clement, Leoville, Pichon-Longueville, Latour
- „ Cos d'Estournel, Rauzan, Duhart Milon

I went through my own list, covering the period 1893 to 1945 for the sake of comparison, and this was my selection:

Chateau Leoville, 1911, 1917, 1920, 1928, 1929, 1945 (6 times)

Reminiscences of an Epicure

- „ Larose, 1923, 1924, 1928, 1937, 1945
Pichon Longueville, 1924, 1928, 1930, 1937, 1945
(both 5 times)
- „ Latour, 1914, 1920, 1928, 1943 (4 times)
- „ Cos d'Estournel, Rauzan, Langoa (3 times)
- „ Lafite, Cantenac Brown, Beychevelle, Mouton
Rothschild, Domaine de Pavie, Pontet Canet,
Palmer (2 times)

It will be noted that the Professor groups all the Leovilles together and the two Rauzans. The comparison is interesting. Out of fourteen wines, we have the same preference for eleven. Of the remaining three, the Professor has a preference for Margaux, Duhart Milon and Pape Clement, and I record my vote for Pontet Canet, Cantenac Brown and Domaine de Pavie. My favourite Bordeaux, as I have always said, has been the Leovilles, and Chateau Leoville Poyferré in particular. Of the Premiers Crus Classes I have always preferred Chateau Latour to Chateau Lafite or Chateau Margaux. Graves and St. Emilion only appear in both the lists once.

I commend this interesting comparison to others who are Claret lovers and may have kept a list over the years.

.

The white wines of Bordeaux have for long been popular in England, whilst Claret—due no doubt to that Grand Alliance for so many years between the Scots and the French against their hereditary enemy the English—has always been more popular and more drunk by the masses in Scotland than in England. But Graves is Mr. John Bull's idea of something better than beer for the good occasion.

There are two kinds of Graves, the compound which comes from behind Shaftesbury Avenue into which sulphur appears to have quite unnecessarily entered, but is sweet and when iced makes not a bad summer drink; the other is the Graves that tries to be a dry wine and sometimes succeeds quite admirably. The finest Graves I ever had was some Chateau

Wines

Latour, Grand Vin Blanc of the 1920 vintage and drunk towards the end of 1925. It was sold by the shippers as "White Dry Graves at perfection, pronounced flavour and bouquet, anti-rheumatic". I do not know about that last description—I am sure it would never be believed by the ordinary English medico who puts you off all wines, but the wine was very beautiful and only slightly sweet. I have not drunk Chateau Carbonnieux which is considered of high quality and about which the Mahommedan lady had such languishing dreams. One must turn to the Great Sauternes to obtain great quality.

The first Sauternes one ever drank in youth is a definite landmark and impresses one more than the first sip of fine Claret. The palate is young and unspoilt and sensitive, and the first impact of that glorious full flavour is like something one has never experienced before or since. I remember my first bottle of Haut Sauternes, whether or not it was Chateau d'Yquem I do not know, but I had been left alone at the age of twenty-one at a hotel on the Belgian coast, my friend having been called back to London on business. I sat down to dinner alone and I suppose I ordered something that sounded good, or what is more likely, a kindly wine-waiter may have had pity on me and thought that a sweet lady from the Bordelais would be a better solace for my youthful loneliness than a Belgian lady flaunting herself on the Digue. Anyhow, it was a revelation, and as all sensible persons would do, I finished the bottle.

Never since has any Sauternes filled me with the same intensity of glorious well-being, not even the great Chateau d'Yquem of 1921 which I bought in half-bottles in 1934 and for which I paid then 288/- the double half-dozen. This wine has justly been called the finest Sauternes since the phylloxera and at thirteen years of life when I drank it was still probably too young to be at its best. Yquem of a first-class vintage should be at the height of its glory in about a quarter of a century, but a couple of bottles of Yquem 1878 which I bought

Reminiscences of an Epicure

in about 1918 from the same source as I obtained wonderful Sherries described in a later chapter, had definitely gone off—after forty years.

It is difficult for a wine-lover to decide when exactly to drink such a wine as this. Taken with dessert, after an ordinary, or extraordinary, dinner, it seems wasted, where a Madeira or a good Sherry would do just as well or better. To commence straight away and drink it with fish is also rather sacrilege. I used to like to come home after the theatre, and find a nice little supper spread out and ready on the shining table with its silver and crystal—just a little piece of cold salmon or trout and a peach to follow—and with this we would open a half-bottle of Yquem, and it was very good. Most pleasant dreams followed.

Of the other great Sauternes, I binned Chateau de Rayne Vigneau more than once and Chateau Lafourie Peyraguey 1924 stands out amongst many. Lately a small rather unknown outsider from St. Croix du Mont called Chateau Lorette, bottled at the Chateau, of 1943 vintage, was far from being an unworthy successor, and I must not refrain from mentioning some Haut Sauternes of the good year 1945 with no known pedigree which comes from the old firm of H. R. Williams—with a lot of other names added to it now—which at the moment of writing is lying quietly in its bin and dreaming of the joys it is going to bestow.

A last word before leaving the Bordelais must be about a wine that is shipped from Bordeaux but grows outside the Bordelais, and is actually in the country of the Dordogne. This is the district from which Bergerac wine comes and Monbazillac in particular. The good people there claim that in a good year their wine is as good as anything out of Sauternes. Let us hope so. Anyhow I have always liked Monbazillac, and when I drink it I like to think of and remember a day when I saw the great Coquelin play Cyrano de Bergerac, and what a tour de force it was! May his memory and may the wines of Bergerac ever continue.

CHAPTER 3

Burgundy and the Rhone

There would seem to be only two beverage French wines known to the common man, and this being, we are told, the age of the common man, it behoves us to say something about his wines—for his edification.

Should you stand at the counter of a surburban wine-shop you will see a man or a woman of the masses coming to buy something special because Uncle Tom and Auntie Lizzie are coming to spend the day with them on Sunday, and they want to give the old dears a treat. And ten to one they will buy one of two things—a Burgundy or a white Bordeaux. Perhaps if the husband served in France during the War, his mind will soar to what he had over there and which he called 'Nuts' and 'Graves'—with a hard 'a'—signifying the Burgundy called 'Nuits' and the White Bordeaux called 'Graves'. The Graves which will be offered is to-day the cheapest French wine and though rather sweet will be of wholesome quality. But the Burgundy he will take away with him has come a much longer journey than from the neighbourhood of Dijon and will be a flagon of Australian or a bottle of South African red wine.

"That's a real Burgundy, you will like it", the lady behind the counter will say, "but of course if you would prefer one of these French imitations, we have one called Volnay", etc., etc., etc.

Whilst this conversation is proceeding in England, a French Regiment on the march in the Côte d'Or has reached the confines of the Clos de Vougeot. The Colonel has halted his men and faced them towards the vineyard. They have presented arms and sounded the general salute. Then they have turned about and marched on again. The traditional compliment to the King of Wines has been rendered.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Since 1918 I have binned Clos de Vougeot of the years 1919, 1923, 1926 and 1928. None of them, I regret to say, were outstanding, although 1923 and 1928 were both more or less good years. The 1923 was the best, but not a very good 'best', and I paid 90s. a dozen for them. I seemed to be more successful with my Musigny—1915, 1923, 1929 and 1946, the 1915 and the 1923 being outstanding. The 1915 had a glorious bouquet and was all velvet and satin. In addition to these two the best Burgundies I had were a Beaune Grèves, *Enfant Jesus*, of 1926—a wine I always look for and of which I have many charming memories—and a Morey, Clos de Tart of 1928, which was a great stand-by in adversity at the beginning of the 1939 War. I also had another Morey—Clos des Lambrays—of 1933, a bad year. Maurice Healy has a good deal to say of these two wines, both vineyards producing wines of delicacy and unusual breed and distinction. I can remember them both as light wines and very flavoured, and worthy of Morton Shand's dictum of Clos de Tart that "for sheer delicacy, breed and finesse, perhaps the very finest Burgundy there is, and possessing a long life when of a fine vintage".

I had a Richebourg 1926 which cost a lot of money, but did not seem to live up to its reputation. A Clos de Reine of 1911 is marked with two asterisks as having been much enjoyed, but I was never able to find out where it came from. The same remark applies to a Clos de Conté 1937, which is a nice balanced wine of very good body, but the wine merchant who supplied it was never able to tell what district it had sprung from. Of the excellent 1929's I recall the Musigny again, and a Beaujolais Moulin-à-vent, which was very pleasant and was a regularly consumed wine during 1936 and 1937.

I have been told that a liking for Chambertin is not to be particularly commended. It was Napoleon's favourite Burgundy, and to say you like it is to acknowledge that you like a heavy wine that has more than hint of coarseness. At any rate I did full justice to this growth, having stocked vintages of 1918, 1923, 1928 and 1937. The label 'Chambertin' has

Wines

perhaps been plagiarized more than any other of the great Burgundies. It is a pity that so much poor stuff has been allowed to take refuge under its banner, and the same applies to Beaune and Pommard, which the gentlemen in Soho often sell containing twenty per cent from the Côte d'Or and eighty per cent from Algeria—or worse.

In parenthesis let us say one word about Algerian 'Burgundy'. When it does not taste of methylated spirit or straw, and is sufficiently matured, it can be quite good as a beverage wine, and after all it has been grown and made into wine by Frenchmen—which cannot be said always of South African and Australian. I have made excellent 'cup' of Algerian red wine at its old price of eighteen shillings a dozen.

Regarding Burgundy on the whole I do not understand anyone—let alone a connoisseur of wines—saying "Burgundy at its best overtops Claret at its best". When still 'green' one can drink Burgundy more enjoyably than Claret in that condition, and a beautiful old Burgundy, carefully "chambré'd" more in the temperature of the kitchen than that of the dining-room and then carefully decanted, can be a revelation and can cause one to say with Rabelais "How good is God to give us of this wine", but to say that the best Burgundy overtops the best Claret is equivalent to saying that a Wagner opera overtops a Beethoven symphony. Comparisons are unwarranted. Let each wine stand separate on its distinctive merits, and let there be Claret lovers always and Burgundy 'fans' ever to their hearts' contents. I will simply say this; up to the age of forty I preferred Burgundy, and from that age onwards my chief love was, and still is, Bordeaux. Let us leave it at that.

From Burgundy proper we pass to the districts further South, where we find the lighter wines of the Beaujolais, by-passing the Côte Chalonnaise where Mercurey and Givry are found, generally rather rare in England, and Macon, whose wines are the cheapest and are just good wholesome Ordinaire. In the Beaujolais—in all wine-merchants' lists figuring as Bur-

Reminiscences of an Epicure

gundies—we meet the real good beverage wines, better value than the ordinary shop-sold Beaunes and Pommards of the Côte d'Or—in fact a Moulin-à-Vent of a good year, such as one might expect from a 1929, 1945, 1947 and 1949, is as good as anything you can get to drink when that first chill of late September comes along. Moulin-à-Vent, a Grand Cru, is at its best at five years old, rather later in maturing than the majority of the Beaujolais fraternity. It is curious that the Gamay which is so despised in Burgundy proper becomes now a noble plant cultivated in this department of the Rhone. It was the favourite wine of Lamartine, who it was said drank Fleurie, Juliéna and Thorins on alternate days. Fleurie matures quickly and is a cheap good purchase; personally I have liked Juliéna best of all Beaujolais wines, very fruity and an elegant wine, and I think the most delicious when you can obtain it. Thorins I have never seen on sale in England. Another Beaujolais—Morgon—is very full-bodied and takes five to ten years to develop its scent of strawberries and its true excellence.

Somewhere tucked away in this part of the world, bordering on the Rhone, are a number of nondescript vineyards which are neither properly-speaking Beaujolais nor have they the characteristics of the proper Rhone wines. It is usually known in the trade as Bas-Beaujolais, and the wines are merely good ordinary wines and can be picked up to-day quite cheaply.

And so we come to the Rhone—which means Hermitage, Côte Rotie and Chateaufort du Pape. We are in a beautiful part of France that stretches from the Rhone southwards to Avignon, where the Popes—or rather the rival Popes—were happier in their choice of wine than they were in drinking the hot, heady wines grown by their Italian brothers in Rome. "Ancient Hermitage", according to George Meredith, "has the light of the antique, the merit that it can go to an extreme old age". I had at one time a prize dozen of some beautiful Hermitage of the great year 1920, which did not become an antique; and it fell about in this way. I was called away

Wines

to Canada for some months in 1933 on a legal Action, and when I returned my wife said to me; "There was a lovely wine you had in your cellar. I couldn't resist it and I just drank the lot". Truly enough, there stood an empty bin . . . Well, someone had enjoyed it anyway!

I had Hermitage in two other years; both were good, 1929 and 1933. I always liked Côte Rotie best, and had especially some 1929. It was a glorious crimson colour, full-bodied and like satin, with the flavour of ripe raspberries and the scent of earthy violets; and it arrived just in time, I remember, to be introduced to a fine brace of pheasants. What wonderful things these wines made from the rare Sirrah grape can be! Curious that Shiraz in Persia, from where the vines are reputed to have come, becomes Sirrah and Jerez in Spain.

The last great wine of the Rhone, Chateauneuf du Pape, I have never been so enthusiastic about. It is a 'mongrel' wine so far as its blended variety of grape-contents is concerned, and owes not a little to its name and its romantic history in connection with the Popes at Avignon. It has all the full characteristics of a Rhone wine, but is inferior to Hermitage in bouquet and to both its big brothers in body. A lot of Rhone ordinaire wine is sold at a much cheaper price, some of which is good but not outstanding, and there is of course the Tavel Rosé, considered the best of the vins rosés. These latter wines have their devotees, but I cannot find anything to like in them even with all the care to serve them under ideal conditions. They miss all the qualities of red wine, and when chilled I do not think there is a white wine in Christendom that I would not prefer to it. Well, it is a good thing that it takes more than one to make a world. I will say this for it, that Tavel Rosé is to be preferred to its brother of Bordeaux and the concoction of the same tint that emanates from South Africa.

.

We now turn to the white wines of these districts—starting

Reminiscences of an Epicure

from Chablis, which is the most Northern and comes from a district not so very far from Paris itself, and is watered by a tributary of the River Seine. Some four hundred hectares of ground in the Vignoble of Chablis are in full bearing and produce less wine than is sold as Chablis every year. This is rather a paradox, but it is not difficult to explain.

In the first place, when the average Englishman thinks of, or wants to buy a dry white wine, such as he associates with the Burgundy district, only one name ever occurs to him, and that is Chablis—so Chablis he asks for, and the accommodating wine-merchant, backed by his wholesaler and with the help of the man who prints the labels, produces what he is asked for. Also, the Englishman in search of something to drink with oysters, knows of only three drinks—Stout, Chablis and Champagne. So when he treats his friends to a dozen of the best, he thinks they will be offended if he offers them Stout and his pocket will not run to Champagne, so he takes the middle course and asks for—Chablis. Unfortunately for the true Chablis-lover, all wine grown in the Chablis district is in the first place allowed by law in France to pass as Chablis, as is only natural, but the true Chablis of the connoisseur comes only from a comparatively small area that has as sub-soil a belt of bituminous clay which produces the particular virtue of the delicate and clean flavour that is associated with its finest wines.

On this sub-soil of the hilly slopes the Pinot grape flourishes, but does not flourish on the lower levels, where the wicked Gamay holds sway, and it is from the Pinot grape alone that 'La Moutonne' and 'Les Grenouilles' flourish. So when you go to buy Chablis pay a little—sometimes a good deal more—and buy a wine from one of the notable vineyards, and do not be deceived by statements that what you are being offered is real true Chablis just because it is pointed out to you that it has a glint of green underlying its yellow. I can tell of a wine-vendor in Soho who actually puts his Chablis into greenish-tinted bottles. So much for Chablis.

Wines

We then come to the great white wines of Burgundy—Montrachet and Meursault, considered by many judges of wines the finest French white wine—and even the best beverage white wine in the world. In England it must be drunk comparatively young, but Montrachet in France taken direct from its original bins can acquire a good age and be all the better for it. I see that I had, and specially noted, Meursault Charmes of the years 1923 and 1926, both very fine wines, and particularly Montrachets of 1924 and 1928, the latter costing 82s. a dozen pre-war price.

For general use one must go to White Macon or Pouilly and Pouilly Fuissé. These two latter can be used at such times and for such purposes as Chablis would be prescribed. They are the cheapest on the wine-list and they are as nice as anything in the world when well cooled on a hot summer day. They are not for people who do not like the gun-flint, the flavour that is called fumosity.

If you want a really fine specimen of the gun-flint—and it is a great contrast and change from the rather sickly sweetness of so much Bordeaux white wine—I recommend White Hermitage, a wine generally rare in this country. I had some gloriously fine White Hermitage Tête du Cuvée 1929 bought at the Army and Navy Stores, where the late Captain Heath gathered together one of the most interesting collections of French wines for sale between the two Great Wars. It had marked vinosity and fumosity and was mellow and liquorous to a degree. I had White Hermitage, also from the same source, of the 1933 and 1937 Vintages, and I once found it in a hotel, and that was before I ever found it quoted on any wine-list; I had read about it and wanted to try it. It was at the Spread Eagle Inn at Thame, over which at the time presided that wonderful Greenwich Village artist turned restaurateur, Mr. Fothergill, who has subsequently written some interesting books about an inn-keeper's life. Amongst his habits was that of measuring and collecting the heights of well-known people who patronized his establishment, but

Reminiscences of an Epicure

after a very fine and well-cooked lunch, I thought he would have found it more interesting, and more profitable from an advertising point of view, to take the measurements of those who had lunched or dined nobly, horizontally and not vertically.

Well, arriving dusty and hot and tired, and when Mr. Fothergill himself was proffering a wine-list of which obviously he was proud, I said—I do not know why—"Have you any white Hermitage?" Yes, he had—marvellous—and there and then after an interesting talk with him on the subject of Hermitage, red and white, we got the desired bottle, and very good it was.

St. Péray, the sparkling wine of the Rhone is interesting, but is more for the 'gout française'. Sparkling white Burgundy, which possesses some of the qualities of its still self, is a good wine and the best substitute for Champagne. But red Sparkling Burgundy . . . Why take the goodly precious wine of the Côte d'Or, Volnay for example, stir it up with a broomstick till it froths and bubbles, and make a veritable witches' brew of it?

CHAPTER 4

Some wines of France, and some miscellaneous wines

There has been a fashion in Champagnes as in all things in which the ladies take a special interest.

In days before I can remember, the Champagne to drink on all great occasions was Veuve Clicquot. That was the wine to have on your table, familiarly known by the soubriquet of 'the Widow'. All stories then about Champagne were stories about the 'widow'. It seemed appropriate too, when Queen Victoria sat stately and alone on her Throne, that, in drinking this wine made by the 'widow' in France, a silent unconscious tribute was being paid to that other Widow of Windsor.

Then later on came Pommery, and about this time perhaps the phrase 'A bottle of the Boy' was coined. Then in the early Edwardian days that I knew, it was Pol Roger everywhere. What a goodly wine it was, with plenty of body, a lovely flavour, and the full Champagne bouquet. The name too always sounded nice and warm and comforting, and it was a sight to see the array of bottles of Pol Roger at dinner time at the Berkeley or supper time at the Savoy.

After this time Krug seems to have become very popular, and was, and always has been, of very good quality. I always kept it as a 'State wine' and have lively recollections of the 1904 in and around 1925, when I suppose it was tending to become rather an old wine. An older Krug of 1900 which I had bought subsequently with a warning attached to it, proved quite drinkable, but was pétillant rather than sparkling. To continue the story up to date, the Krug of 1937 can be found in many wine-lists and should be at its best between 1952 and 1955. I always kept a stock of half-bottles, usually non-vintage, for occasional use, and some quarter-bottles just to drink with a sandwich when motoring. Some unknown Champagnes which a firm of good wine-merchants would sell at

Reminiscences of an Epicure

a considerably reduced price were worth all their money.

Again, one looks back to very old times, and to those early bottles of 'bubbly', thinking nothing of the quality that must often have been poured like pearls before swine, but only of the joy of living and the sound of the cork and the tinsel on the table. One remembers the endless mass of Champagnes at weddings and at smart private dances in London in the good old days, and I can also recall Champagne without limit being served at a continuous supper at a dance during American prohibition times given by some very charming Americans in their New York house.

Once upon a time the wines of Champagne were still, and very good they must have been judging from still Champagnes that exist to-day—Verzena and Bouzy amongst the still reds and Sillery and Cramant amongst the whites. I never had a stock of any of them, but liked them when I could get them, and the reds always seemed to have some affinity with the Red Hocks. They were not so heavy as Burgundy, but had more aplomb than Claret, deep-coloured and full-bodied, with all the fresh clear aroma associated with the sparkling wines we know. Sillery and Cramant and Ay I knew not, and they have always been scarce in this country—even to-day when a lot of strange wine has got about, none of it apparently has come on to the London market.

Amongst 'other wines' of France outside those already mentioned I have always thought the wines of the Jura the most interesting. I see that I binned in 1937 some Pupillin 1926 and 1933 and some Chateau Chalons 1928 and 1929 Chateau bottled. These are known as 'Vins Jaunes' and come from the famous and historic castle of D'Arlay, belonging to the Marquis de Vogüé. The wines of Chateau Chalons have amazing staying powers and specimens are extant of most ancient vintages. The interesting fact about this wine is its excessive 'Sherry' flavour, resembling a Manzanilla but with much more body. I seem to remember reading somewhere that the sherry industry of Jerez was founded on wines

Wines

imported from the Jura. or was it vice versa? Anyhow the wines were shipped to this country about the date I purchased them by a gentleman possessing the romantic name of 'Count O'Kelly de Gallagher' and his emissary over here was a very pleasant person who sent out wine-lists from an address called 'The Mutilated House'.

Anjou and Touraine wines have obtained some standing in England since the War, probably owing to the scarcity at one time of Burgundies and Bordeaux and to their high prices. I have always particularly loved these wines, not only the rich Clos du Vau which I had before the War, but especially the Pouilly-sur-Loire to be obtained to-day. They seem to have all the flavour of Moselle combined with a richness of their own. No wonder Rabelais exclaimed of these wines of his own country-side, "O lachryna Christi, it is of the best grape; i'faith, pure Greek, Greek, O the fine white wine, upon my conscience it is a kinde of taffatas wine". These wines are well worth buying to-day, and the lighter wines are stated to be free from acid. Will doctors please note.

Sparkling Saumur used to be worth buying before the War when it could be got for only 66s. a dozen, and with its 'pop' and its 'fizz' it was a cheap way of making merry. It was useful for making 'cup', but regarded as a wine pure and simple I am reminded of Professor Saintsbury's description of one of these nondescript sparkling fraternity as "Like ginger-beer, but not so nice". I always stocked some Sparkling Saumur for ordinary festive occasions, and I would always much improve it by emptying it into a jug and refreshing it with a port-glass of brandy. It makes a considerable improvement.

A very old friend of mine should have written what I am now going to write, and a very interesting story he would have made of it. He had the most extensive knowledge of every wine that was ever made, and there was not a country in the world that he had not visited. But his knowledge began and ended with 'vins du pays'; he never bought Chateau Clarets, although he knew well when a wine was good—you

Reminiscences of an Epicure

might say that his speciality was ordinary good beverage wines.

He was a great romancer, and he told me of what he had drunk in *Santiago de Chile* or at the foot of the *Himalayas*, in the *Yukon* or in *Tierra del Fuego*. He had strange tales to tell of foreign hotels—in *Buda-Pest* the more as regards the second of the trio that ends in “—and song”—and of all the wines he had met with, in his journeyings, the worst were Australian, he said.

He had the most extraordinary way of ferreting out something cheap. It was 1916. “Come with me to lunch”, he said in my office, and he took me to a well-known fish place close to *Liverpool Street Station*, which had a snack bar and a restaurant at the back.

To accompany our lunch we had a bottle of the most delightful Hock—a *Marcobrunner* I remember—and the price of it was 1s. 6d.—one shilling and six pence! Apparently the firm found no buyers for their German wines during the War, and indeed many English mistakenly thought it a patriotic act to refrain from drinking Hock and Moselle. My friend being I believe of descent from that race—I always suspected East Prussia or Lithuania—he had no scruples in buying what he liked best. He certainly preferred Hock to any other wine, and he always told me to look out for wines from the *Saar*, which were cheaper and quite good as ordinary beverage wine, provided you did not go in for particular *füders* and dilate on the virtues of *spatlese* and *auslese*. Needless to say I spent many days lunching at that City restaurant after my introduction, and treating myself to the eighteen-penny Hock, my conscience as regards patriotism being salved by the fact that I had ‘done my job’ in the Army and been invalided out that year.

What has happened to all the Red Hocks? *Oberingelheimer*, *Walporzheimer* and *Assmanshausen*? In the old days I always binned a dozen or two of them, and I found them a pleasant change from *Claret* and *Burgundy*. They are not a ‘mongrel’ wine, which is the only name to give to a lot of red

Wines

wine from Spain and Portugal and elsewhere. Besides, they are not only a wonderful specific for insomnia, but they agree also with the internal arrangements of those unfortunate people whom doctors have forbidden to drink red wines. Will doctors please again note.

The most satisfactory of these wines that I had was a Walporzheimer Pfaffenberg 1922 sold in 1924 as a "Full-bodied excellent wine, free from sugar". By 1926, after two years in bottle, it had greatly improved and was a first-class wine. As I write, a certain firm—famous as importers of German wines prior to 1914—inform me that Red Hocks are to be obtained and that they are 168s. a dozen!

I remember sitting at lunch next to the late Major Rudd, a partner of Berry Bros., the very old wine-merchants established in St. James Street in the seventeenth century, and having a most interesting talk with him on Hocks. His book *Hocks and Moselles* is well worth reading by anyone interested in these wines. Two of the most wonderful wines of the famous 1921 vintage obtainable in this country were a Steinberg Cabinet Auslese, Original Estate Bottling, and a Niersteiner Pettenthal Allerfeinste Goldbeeren Auslese, also Estate Bottling, at a price which even before the War was higher than the price of the most expensive Clarets and Champagnes to-day. It was beyond the capabilities of anyone but millionaires to bin or drink, but I did have the opportunity once of sampling a glass of one of these giants. The volume of flavour and its vinosity were overpowering, but they did not equal the Chateau d'Yquem of that year—one of the greatest wines in the annals of Sauternes—and my host agreed with me.

The lunches which Messrs. Berry Bros. gave at their St. James Street House were very interesting, and my presence at any of them as a matter of fact was always confined to Bordeaux wines. Charles Walter Berry had the autumn before, on the occasion of my first visit, returned from his journeying through the French vineyards, and published his interesting

Reminiscences of an Epicure

book *In search of wine*. As a great connoisseur of Bordeaux and indeed all wines, it suprised me to find him dilating on the virtues of Tokay and Muscat de Frontignan. Indeed, after finishing the sampling of some superb Chateau wines, he drank, enjoyed and recommended a glass of the sweet rich Frontignan, a wine of which few English people have ever been very fond.

The "Essenz" of Imperial Tokay—without which cognomen it seems improper to mention Tokay—is of course a great stimulant in illness or weakness, largely owing to its phosphorus contents. I had some in my cellar in 1925—"Tokay Essenz 1906. From the Imperial Cellars of the late Emperor Francis Joseph"—sold as a magnificent specimen, absolutely unequalled: 20s. a bottle. My comment on it at the time was "Very luscious, but like all Tokay rather disappointing". Imagine a Communist Tokay from the cellars of the late Comrade Joseph Stalin!

Whilst talking of wines outside the beaten track, mention must be made of Malaga which can be bought to-day at a much cheaper price than any of the other dessert wines, unless we except Muscat de Frontignan and Commandaria. Malaga in the past has meant to me a golden brown variety and a very dark brown, which latter I liked the better of the two and it resembled some of the old East India Sherries which were almost black. It is the lighter Malaga that is on sale to-day, but not as light as the dessert wine we relied upon in New York during prohibition days. If in these times you feel you must have a post-prandial wine and find that twenty shillings for a bottle of sherry does not go very far, I recommend the purchase of a bottle of Malaga at half the price.

"Hi, Boy, bring half a pint of mountain!"

It was a popular drink when Fielding wrote his *Amelia*, and its popular name was 'Mountain', but it was soon to be considered coarse by gentry and generally fell into disuse owing to its cheapness and to its being for that reason acclaimed by the vulgar.

Wines

Commandaria is another inexpensive dessert wine that can be obtained to-day, and came back a few years ago to a market where it had not been known for many years. It is dull red, turning to tawny with age and has been described as 'marvellously high-flavoured and sweet'. Its chief interest lies in its classic antiquity and its having been mentioned by Pliny as made from grapes grown in the Commandery of the Knights Templars at Paphos.

Rioja from Spain, being well known. I need not talk about, except to say that the White—sweet and dry—are useful beverage wines but should be cheaper, and the Red is like so many of its kind, a poor substitute for Burgundy. I did have in the long ago some Spanish 'Andalusia' burgundy-type that was far from despicable. But it was in my thirties, and it was heady stuff and suitable only to youth. I have never seen it sold as such since those days, but it was far and away superior to the Rioja of to-day.

The Chilean Government have been trying to popularise their wines in this country. The White does not seem to travel well at all, but the Red, shipped in bottle, seems to be trying its best to uphold the honour of its country. M. André Simon says that he tasted admirable wines in Chile, but they were not good when shipped to England. He mentions at the same time some Argentine wines that he found good in South America and better in London. I remember that I had many years ago some 'Mendoza' burgundy-type from the Argentine, which was very satisfying.

Portugal has been putting some very pleasant beverage wines on the market lately and there have been shipments of some quite passable red wine resembling a Beaujolais at 7s. a dozen with a good deal of bottle-age. I have however looked in vain for the white Bucellas—a wine with a particular flavour which was not unpleasing and which I used to keep as a change for ordinary drinking.

Some of the Hungarian and Yugo-Slav wine on the market—mostly white wine from the Riesling grape—has been dis-

Reminiscences of an Epicure

tinctly good, the latter being quite reasonably cheap. A Hungarian wine that I tried lately was Zoldsilvani, a Moselle type as its name suggests—quite excellent drinking, very like some of the Alsace wine. All these are of course white; no red wines are being shipped apparently from Hungary. Where is Carlowitz—or Austrian Voslauer, both excellent Red wines—and that great wine Egri Bikaver, or 'Bull's Blood' that invigorates a man so much that "he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course"?

CHAPTER 5

Bad sailors and Alien Shores

I think it is an axiom that all wine to be perfect must be drunk in the country of origin. This statement needs a little qualification. For who has ever drunk Vintage Port in Oporto, or sipped Bristol Cream in Jerez?

The statement if true must be applied only to certain wines and it does not necessarily depend upon blending or alcoholic contents or fortification, or any other of the seven deadly sins of which wine-merchants are suspect.

Take Madeira, as an example. This is a fortified wine. To be at its best, say the wiseacres—and I number particularly my friend, Mr. Peacock of *Nightmare Abbey* amongst the great devotees of Madeira—it must be bottled and binned under the same conditions as exist in its island of origin, and there are some who go so far as to say that it must be opened and drunk only on a day that conforms in every detail—temperature, humidity, barometric pressure—with the conditions enjoyed in the blessed Isle of Madeira.

I do not know what it is, but the modern brew is grossly disappointing. What is Mr. Blandy doing or the great firm of Cossart, Gordon? I have tried everything that calls itself Bual and Sercial and Malmsey. I have had heart-to-heart talks with wine-merchants and have found them wanting. "Try our Cama de Lobos or our Sao Martinho". They are thick and muddy and sulphurous and very acid, and not one of them—and I have sampled the wines offered me in every direction—comes anywhere near a princely dozen of what I once obtained some thirty years ago from a wine-merchant in Perth, who knew good things as all good Scotsmen do, and this wine described as 'Very Choice Old Pale' was a glorious pale orange-red, a beautiful light wine, clear and limpid as the water of a trout-stream and possessing an unusually full

Reminiscences of an Epicure

and seductive flavour. I remember I had another dozen, and then another. The elusive quality of the first two dozen wore off, probably because the last lot came from a different cask, or as I noted at the time it had by then got bottle-age, whereas when I first bought it and drank it in 1920 it was 'from the wood'. While it lasted it was glorious, and I always tell wine-merchants in my fruitless quest for its equal to-day, that I am inclined to think that the shipment was of a rare variety known as 'Rain water'—an American blend of Madeira as elusive as 'Newfoundland' Port. That wine anyhow was not home-sick.

Italian wines, except some of the red wines, are notoriously bad sailors. I except some red wines, as I have found good Chianti both in London and New York, and since 1939 the Brolio with a vintage date made and bottled with great care by that Italian nobleman who has done his best to instil in the minds of his countrymen the principles of French viticulture, is quite exceptionally good. And when Chianti is well matured and really good it can lie—not hang, please, as you like to in your pretty flask—as companion to any good ordinary Claret, and not disgrace the bin. But what a price it is to-day!

There is a fat and round-faced and smiling Italian in Soho who has put me on to some odd Sicilian wine of his own particular part of the world, that is not to be despised at the price, but his Chianti at times has really amused me. I said to him one day: "You are a good buyer, and you are also an excellent blender". He took my remark as a great compliment. "Si, signor, I know how to make good wine—and cheap, hein?" I certainly do not know any other blender, who with a little genuine Chianti and a good deal of Algerian and the help of sirops and what-not can produce something which does bear some distant affinity with what you drank on draught that time you dined *al fresco* at the little table beside the lake at Como.

I once had in my cellar in England some old Red Capri,

that was marvellous. Though White Capri can be obtained for the asking to-day—and very muddy it tastes—I have never been able to get the red again, the nearest relative of which was a St. Emilion Claret. It had travelled all right, but of course in bottle not in cask, and that does so-to-say give a bottle a bit of a leg-up compared with the poor jolted cask.

But even the pretty dumpy flasks in which Orvieto comes to the table does not convey the charm of that wine drunk in its home-land. You go to the Umbrian Marches, and there on your table in the hotel is Orvieto abbocado—the sweet variety—and you wonder if you have ever before tasted anything so delicious. So when you return and see in a shop window some of that same wine labelled Orvieto—dumpy flask and all—you think yourself indeed lucky and you rush in and buy it. Alas. It is a good wine still, but that elusive cheery fragrance which blossomed under the blue skies of its native country has disappeared into insipidity under alien influence, and you say to yourself that at half the money a French Barsac would be just as good and better.

Some other Italian white wines which one can obtain in England can look nice, but are 'not much class'. I had once some beautiful-looking pale-golden Lacrima Christi that promised well, but it tasted as if someone had taken a respectable white Burgundy and had strained it through powdered flint and then stirred into it a box of sulphur matches. White Chianti, though bottled in Italy in flask, never seems to come up to any ordinary white Macon, which is cheaper. It loses its flavour after the first glass, and the same applies to white Capri.

And Asti Spumante—I could not solemnly, or even gaily, at a party in England, sit down and drink this faery wine with the merry laugh in its bottle and the sun of Italy glancing through its bubbles. But how I did enjoy a bottle of it, drunk in the little inn-garden on the top of Monte Generoso, after a long crawl by funicular in the hot sun on a hot summer's

Reminiscences of an Epicure

day with the lizards peeping and darting out of the rocks as one went up

In the long ago the Café d'Italie of Old Compton Street used to sell a very cheap and very deep-orange-coloured wine which it called 'Falerno', and which took my fancy then. It was a coarse wine, very robust and full of bloom—like an Italian peasant-girl—and so it did not claim Latin ancestry with the old Falernian of Horace, which of course must have been an aristocrat. The poet would have lavished praise on a much more refined and delicate wine. Curiously enough, though I poke and pry into the Italian grocers-cum-wine-merchants in Soho I have never been able to obtain that wine again.

As for the red wines, Barolo and Barbera, they are useful and warming, but as a rule have little flavour, and Nebbiolo is a bad substitute for Claret.

I have by-passed Marsala, which to one's way of thinking is a British wine rather than Italian. Anything that Nelson touched must surely be British. The Army & Navy Stores, through its naval connection no doubt, used to specialize in Marsalas in the old days, and very good some of them were in their fruity way, if you did not mind a sweet acid wine. Its main attraction as a dessert wine lay in its cheapness as compared with Port, Sherry or Madeira—and at its best it compared favourably with any ordinary Madeira, its cousin by birth. I would not buy it at present prices, which are almost on a level with the others. The best I ever drank was some old Syracuse of an 1850 Vintage, with a beautiful brown colour and a rich bouquet; and the worst was a bottle I got from a bootlegger and opened to celebrate the arrival of my family in New York. It was I suppose all right for drinking healths in, but I wonder in what alchemist's lair in prohibition America its grapes first ripened.

It is the dry white wine without much body that seems to be averse to travelling, and when drunk in England to be all of the family 'Clos du Terroir', and their qualities are so

Wines

ephemeral that I suppose their divergent subtle flavours can only be experienced when consumed as a 'vino de pasto'. How far the romance and enchantment of the scene account for the remembrance I do not know, but I am particularly thinking of some Swiss wines of the Valois and Neuchatel which delight. Of these stands out a beautiful Swiss wine, possessing a flavour between a Moselle and a Graves, called Chateau Conthey, which I took to England; it did travel well, and was delicious at three years old.

French growers have on the whole managed to overcome the bane of travelling so far as regards the better class wines, though there are to this day bigotted Frenchmen who will not believe that anything worthy to be ranked as 'behind the faggots' can find a resting place in an Englishman's cellar. In the same way a German will tell you that lager beer is not worth drinking out of Germany and he will so talk about his Pilsner, while his brother in Bohemia—or must I say Czecho-Slovakia—will say that Pilsner is rubbish after being jolted in a train to Germany and that the real thing can only be drunk in Pilsner Urquell.

Who would think of drinking Retznia or Mavrodaphni in England with their flavour of pitch, resin and turpentine with which the Greeks have from time immemorial dosed their wines, but I am told that a long residence in the country produces a liking for the pitch-pine flavour, and when once acquired it is preferred to any other normal wine.

I suppose that South African and Australian wines suffer more than any others by reason of the long journey and the crossing of the Equator. Some years ago a bright young Frenchman who owned the business of Louis Poirier—the Louis Poirier who was famous many years ago for his Bâtard Montrachet and his liking for Benedictine—told me that he had found a way of making South African wines travel, on the principle that wine in full bottle does not receive so much internal 'milles secousses' as it does when in a barrel. This is, I presume, the method now largely adopted of transporting

Reminiscences of an Epicure

the wine in large glass tanks, but though this is an advantage it does not overcome the entire difficulty, and certainly not that of the climatic condition and temperature when 'crossing the line'. The richer white wines of South Africa are good, the Paarl Amber for instance shipped by Messrs. Burgoyne, and some of the Sauternes type made from a mixture of Semillon and Muscadel grapes. These particular vines appear to suffer least from transportation, and there has been an official record made to that effect. The ordinary dry Hock types or Riesling seem lamentably poor and lose their flavour, but not their bouquet, ten minutes after the first glass has been poured. My South African mining friends from Johannesburg assure me however that they have drunk delicious white wines, probably Schoongezicht, which I found in London many years ago and was not at all bad.

Some people may like the taste of South African 'burgundy' but it is sad to find the pinot and the gamay changed beyond recognition when transplanted to an alien soil and to experience the kind of wine it produces. As for the Cabernet grape—when it is transplanted to South Africa or Australia it goes 'berserk' when it finds itself in the wild virgin soil of those countries, and the wine that is the offspring is a poor imitation of the noble ancestry in Bordeaux. How in all this galère did that wonder of a grape that made the *Constancia* of the last century arise, made I am told of a variety of a Persian species? Was it so wonderful after all?

South African port-types are drinkable, but so no doubt is much that is manufactured in Marseilles or Cette, but why do they not cultivate Oporto methods and attempt to give us a real 'vintage' port, even if every year is a vintage year? They have tried so hard to capture the 'sherry' market, as compared with the old days when one only used South African 'sherry' if at all for cooking. The wine-merchants however all tell us now that great strides have been made since those times, and that the South African 'sherries' are now good and quite a different article. I have taken great pains to try 'Dry', 'Medium'

Wines

and 'Sweet', and my comments shall be: "Very useful for sherry parties".

There is I suppose a considerable market in Australian wines. I do not know why, because the Empire preference duty is really almost negligible. We have heard of, but have not drunk, an Australian 'Sparkling Coomaree'—I think they call it. As Mr. Morton Shand remarks in one of his books: "There is one use for which Australian wines have been found unrivalled—the christening of British warships at their launches".

The red wines of Australia are a thick edition of that 'Parish's Food' they used to give us in our infancy, full of iron and the flavour of an old steel knife. If you have a penchant towards drinking iron—well and good; and if you are anaemic it is a nice change from 'iron jelloids'. There is a brand called 'Tintara' which is the best of them, and I once obtained from the Army & Navy Stores a wine which they sold as 'Very old Burgundy type' which was really trying to make you take notice of it, and I must not of course forget my boyish enthusiasm for 'Melbonia', which appears to be no longer sold. I was always told in my youth that this wine was made by Nellie Melba's Armstrong family, which no doubt helped largely to make it taste good.

As for the white Australian wines—here is a tale.

I called by appointment to see some eminent shippers of Australian wines; I had told them my trouble, which is that after opening a bottle and drinking the first glass the whole flavour then goes off, and the rest is pure liquid mud. The firm said "We will disillusion you". So most graciously they split a bottle, poured out the glasses, we pledged each other's healths and drank. It was very good. The cork was left out of the bottle, and I was taken round and shown the cellars. We returned in twenty minutes to our open bottle; another glass was poured out, and we drank. Wonderful! I was then taken round and shown some pretty pictures and after a further dissertation on Australian viticulture we returned

Reminiscences of an Epicure

again to our still uncorked bottle. Another glass. Marvellous! The wine still held its original good flavour—so we sat down and talked and proceeded to drink down to the dregs, and still there was no mud. At last I thought I had discovered a real Colonial wine, and my old well-travelled German friend of long ago with his avowed hatred for so-called Australian Hock was at last confounded.

I said I would order a dozen through my wine merchant.

"You can't do that", said the shipper. "The wine is imported in bottle and we have none for sale. We have just some samples for advertising purposes".

So we come back again to the matter of Alien Shores and Bad Sailors. François Villon wrote "Il n'est bon bec que de Paris". The same is true of wine. Like a 'ripe red kiss from a Paris miss', perhaps when all is said and done there is no wine worth drinking save in Paris!

CHAPTER 6

Jerez and Oporto

Sherry, or the wine from Jerez, has had a curious history. Originally a Spanish beverage wine for the thirsty workers of Andalusia, it commenced to be imported on a large scale from the time of the Regency, when George, Prince of Wales, roundly condemned Madeira, and said "By gad, gentlemen, I will in future drink nothing but Sherry!" So, as a dessert wine to take the place of Madeira, it first came prominently into England.

Backwards and forwards the trade ebbed and flowed and ebbed again, until 1861 a certain Richard Ford wrote a book praising the dry Manzanilla, Montilla and the Amontillado, and a new industry was born again. This was a Sherry to drink during meals and to stand always on the sideboard for the uninvited guest.

And then it ebbed again, and was only revived in the memory of most living people when it descended in quality and ascended in quantity, and became the pre-prandial drink without breed or creed, the inspiration of Sherry parties, following the lead of the more subtle and difficult Cock-tail.

"Guests will please each bring a bottle of Sherry—British 'Sherry' not allowed".

Descensus averni. Jerez de la Frontera is in the same room indistinguishable from the synthetic manufactures of South Africa, Cyprus and Cete; only the products of John Bull's alchemy are shut out.

The Sixties and Seventies of last Century saw the high-water mark of the beautiful rich Sherries which a good Victorian was to lay down beside his bin of Vintage Ports. Into the import trade went largely the ports of Bristol, Plymouth and London, not only because they received the Sherry as it was

Reminiscences of an Epicure

shipped from Spain, but also because of their East Indian trade, and they were glad to keep the Sherry in their holds for ballast. Hence arose the Sherry called "East India" and the fable grew up—or was it indeed doubtless a fact—that the wine, having undergone a good rolling, not to say a warm maturing temperature as well, was all the better for it. And so the Victorian collector of good wines thought he had got a rare good thing when his old whiskered wine-merchant in the Minorities told him that it had been shipped twice round the world.

These dessert wines of old Bristol shipping having acquired long bottle age became a wine unsurpassed in bouquet and vinosity and absolutely unknown to-day. Anyone who has drunk it after some fifty or sixty years in bottle can never forget the flavour, and if it is a cliché to describe it as the nectar of the gods, it is the only expression that can adequately describe it. On drawing the cork and decanting the Sherry the most beautiful aroma spread round the room, and the wine crystal clear and of the most exquisite ethereal golden colour was enhanced when, in a thickly cut old decanter, it was placed on the mahogany of the dining-table. Professor Saintsbury refers to the indescribable flavour:

"The entry is 'Pale Rich: Bottled 1865'. It was rich, very rich, almost liqueur; but not in the least fulsome, and of a flavour which I never tasted in any other Sherry".

In 1920 or thereabouts a certain Mr. Cox of Dundee, with regard to whose wine history I have no information, advertised in the "Times" some Sherries and other old wines for sale. I answered his advertisement and received a list of what he had for sale. The Sherries were quoted at 108s. a dozen and included "Light Pale: Bottled 1874, Tovey, Bristol", "Old 1865: Tovey, Bristol", "Pale Rich: Gonzala", some *Vino de Pasio*, and other Sherries carrying the names of Gonzales and Misa and some no names at all. There were some Ports also, not many: some 1878 Chateau Lafite and Chateau d'Yquem, and old bottled Kummel and Heering's Danish

Wines

Cherry Brandy. I remember that I took two bottles each of the four last-named and three dozen of the Sherry. On receipt of the wines and after opening and tasting one bottle of the Sherry I was attracted by a note in Mr. Cox's letter that he had a large number of miscellaneous Sherries, the labels on which were too begrimed to read, which if I liked he would let me have at 60s. a dozen. I promptly took two dozen of these and wished afterwards I had taken the lot, but money in those days was not so plentiful as it might have been, and I had to be content with my five dozen of some of the most wonderful wine in the world. How lucky I was I could not know at the time or I might have some left in this year of grace and scarcity—I was only in my thirties at the time—and my wife and I, and some selected friends, just lapped it up.

When I think of those five dozen I read with regret the fact that Maurice Healy in his *Stay me with Flagons* refers to having only had two bottles of this old Sherry to taste. They were, as he says "Full and luscious yet absolutely dry", and this is the extraordinary fact that all of them had, I remember, a distinctly dry end and it was only the extreme vinosity of them that made them seem so full and sweet and luscious. M. André Simon in his *Vintagewise* states that in 1945 the Saintsbury Club still possessed a few of these old Sherries—and no doubt do so still—and I endorse his words as aptly befitting the first of these bottles that we opened, when he says "Great as these Sherries were, as well as others which I have been privileged to enjoy during the last forty odd years, none ever quite came up to the first fine Sherry I tasted".

There is a sequel to this purchase. On receiving the cheaper two dozen I managed with the help of a sponge and a magnifying glass to decipher the labels on all of them, and they were brothers to the ones I had bought at 108s. with a few different wines from the same shippers. I do not know whether Mr. Cox laid down these wines himself or his father or someone before him, or whether they may have been Sherries he had bought perhaps at the famous auction of the Buckingham

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Palace Sherries in 1901, but they were just something to remember and of which to dream.

The reference to the dates on the bottles is interesting. The fact that one of the Tovey lot was labelled "Old, 1865" would seem to refer to a Sherry old in cask which was bottled in 1865, probably therefore a solera. On the other hand "Gonzala"—not Gonzales in this case—"Pale Rich 1855" would indicate that this was a Vintage date. Famous 'solera' years I see are quoted as 1858, 1860 and 1865.

The most extraordinary part about the wine was that the cork of every bottle, even where the sealing wax had been partly knocked off, was perfect. None had been re-bottled, and there was not a bad bottle in the lot.

In later years I tried to find anything similar to this Sherry, but some "Pale Golden" bottled in 1919 which I secured in 1935 at 90s. could not 'hold a candle to it', and the only Sherry I had at all approaching it was some three dozen half-bottles of Amontillado about thirty-five years in bottle which I picked up in Lime Street in 1922 just before leaving for New York. As prohibition held sway in New York I had a dozen of them shipped to Montreal and had quite a nice drinking bout each time I had to go to Canada on business. The remaining two dozen I was very glad to have on my return to England and sanity in 1924.

Amongst other Sherries which were binned between 1924 and this date were some soleras: a 'Choice Brown 1868', 'Choice Old Oloroso 1869', Sandeman's 'East India 1834, and a 'Flor de Jerez Old Pale, Bin No. 4'—the last from the Army & Navy Stores at the modern price of 270s. a dozen. All were good and praised by those who had not walked in the green pastures of Bristol 1865, as is also a very pleasant old Oloroso called 'Double Century' and shipped by Messrs. Domecq to celebrate their record of two hundred years in the trade—but, when all is said, these other Sherries were just flavoured 'sugar and water' compared with the perfect blending of the old-bottled wine.

Wines

I must not omit to mention here some old East India Sherry which I bought from Messrs. H. R. Williams & Co. when that firm were still in the City and which was almost black. It had a burned taste, and I do not know from what Spanish witches' brew it was solera'd, but it was mighty good.

Two very good Sherries came my way, that were very dry. The first was that comparatively well known Amontillado of great fineness—but always regarded by me as the lightest of Manzanillas—shipped by Gonzales Byass and called 'Tio Pepe'. I bought my first lot of it in 1925 and my entry against it is: "A beautiful dry Sherry, with a particularly wonderful bouquet", and in my cellar-book I had also written these words by Professor Saintsbury: "Some of the finer kinds are really supernacular—the best 'Tio Pepe' for instance". And then I had at the end of my entry, recording my finishing of this bin in April 1926, the words: "After all, it does not equal the Natural Dry Oloroso".

This refers to a very dry wine sold to me at the end of 1924 by certain well-known shippers in Perth. They said: "We have some particularly dry sherry; it would be too dry for many people's tastes and we sell it as a Natural Dry Oloroso". It was all that its name implies—very dry indeed, but very full-bodied, and with a wonderful bouquet. It was, I suppose, an Oloroso shipped unbrandied, i.e. unfortified, but I have never been able to find it since, and it seems something of an enigma to the professional world.

I will not detain you any longer with these ramblings. Quick! Or we will be too late for the Sherry-party!

Who is laying down Port to-day at 240s. a dozen for 1945 and 210s. a dozen for 1947? And is any father bringing up his son in the tradition and ritual of Port drinking? Limbo of the past. Can we reckon on a cellar remaining unscathed for the next twenty years?

One wants a book like this not to be nostalgic. In quoting

Reminiscences of an Epicure

old vintages and shippers, one is doing so with the object of benefitting others by notes on old vintages and variety of wine, and giving some ideas as to what to buy for the future.

In buying vintage Port I am not suggesting that any summary of what one happened to possess will be any criterion of what one should look out for now, but the little list of vintage ports which follows was not of my own sampling and choosing, because as I said before I was not brought up in the Port tradition, and although I have always appreciated and loved a bottle of old Port, I have never been a devotee and have always found it too rich, without any of the subtle variety of Sherry. The following selection was entirely bought on the recommendation of one or two wine-merchants who considered the shippers the best in their opinion for a particular year.

1896	1920
Cockburn: Sandeman	Graham: Croft: Sandeman
1904	1922
Sandeman	Tuke Holdsworth
1908	1924
Sandeman: Graham	Croft: Warre
1912	1927
Dow	Fonseca: Gould Campbell:
	Sandeman: Taylor Fladgate,
	Graham.

Of the above wines I think that Sandeman's 1908 filled one with the most seductive feelings towards the grape. It was on all accounts a delightful wine and was more or less at its best when drunk in or about 1935. I had rather a lot of Sandeman's shipping because I had been of some use to the firm in the matter of shipping some of their Ports and Sherries to South America. The other two wines that stand out were Croft 1924 and Fonseca 1927. Both of these were recommended to me as the best of the year—that is in the opinion of my advisers—and I remember both of them were very good,

Wines

though unfortunately owing to the War drunk too early.

To the world—the modern world—of course Vintage Port means little or nothing, and is unknown to the multitude. Tawny and Ruby Port, and sometimes a White Port, is the drink of the masses, and for those who like it there has been some first-class wine, well matured in wood. The names of Croft, Fonseca, Sandeman, Offley and Kopke amongst others occur as being all dependable, and I have myself from time to time had Fonseca's 'Medium Tawny', Sandeman's 'Old Crusted' and 'Full bodied Fruity', and Croft's 'Fine Old Tawny', and last but not least—because it is our family Port—'Dixon's Double Diamond' beloved by Charles Dickens and still shipped by the firm of Morgan Bros. of Oporto—one of the rather less known Vintage shippers of the past—whose founder was my great-great-grandfather Aaron Morgan.

Tawny Port at its best can be a truly lovely wine, and it always seems to me to be a trifle snobbish on the part of writers of books on wine more or less to disregard it as if they did not want it to be seen walking in the same street as its rich relation. After all, they both have the same parent.

Leaving out of account Tokay and its valuable qualities, there is no wine—no medicine in fact—so good in sickness or health as light tawny Port. There are all sorts of mixtures on the market advertised as pick-me-ups, with their malt and beef adjuncts, but, believe me, the best specific in the world for most ailments is just ordinary good plain Port, and a very pleasant form of medicine withal. I went to see a specialist for neuritis many years ago, and his first words to me were "Don't drink Champagne". That was easy, because it was not my practice to drink a half-bottle every day with my dinner! Then he went through the rest of the wine-list, and a few other drinks besides, and it was practically all taboo until he came to—"Well", he said, "I want you to drink plenty of Port. Have a glass at eleven o'clock with a biscuit. Have another at lunch if you can, and if you can't, take a couple after your dinner".

Reminiscences of an Epicure

"That's a funny thing", I said, "It is the one wine I don't drink. I thought it was too heavy for me".

"All the more reason you should drink it now. If you had been drinking it all this time you probably wouldn't have had to come and see me". He was a sensible man, because the first thing most doctors say is: "Now you must knock off all wines and beers"—and whisky too sometimes.

I do not know whether there is any difference medically between real Port and the port-types made in South Africa, Australia and elsewhere. These are useful for those who just want a pleasant warming drink, and, strange to say, I came across a little time ago some Australian port-type ruby wine which was the nearest thing to a Vintage Port I have ever had.

I have waited in vain to see if some enterprising South African or Australian grower will put a Vintage-type Port on the market as such, at a much cheaper price to-day, which we can all lay down for ten or twenty years. M. André Simon says, and he ought to know: "None of them, however, can hope to match Vintage Port; they do not even try". And he goes on to point out that Vintage Port owes its individuality and excellence to (1) the best grapes of the Douro vintaged under particularly favourable conditions and expertly treated in Portugal, and (2) the knowledge, love and patience of the vintner in England. Well, the people at the back of beyond have certainly the 'favourable conditions', that is uniformly consistent fine summers, they have the transplanted Douro grape and presumably it is not beyond their power to transplant the experts too. The second factor, the vintner in England, would surely be induced to play his part if it were made worth his while, and surely practice makes perfect. And even virgin soil, with all the iron in it, can surely enter into a condition of connubial bliss with the Douro grape when they both understand each other.

So let us lay down a dozen or two of 'Burgoyne 1955' or 'Fell 1960'.

CHAPTER 7

Uncle Tom Cobbly and All

“Over the Hill and over the Dale,
And over the Bourne to Dawlish,
Where ginger-bread wives have a scanty sale,
And ginger-bread nuts are smallish”.

So he sang, and if he had crossed the Hill and the Dale, and gone due West instead of due North from Teignmouth, John Keats would have landed himself at Widecombe Fair instead of Dawlish Fair, and would have had a good cider to sing about instead of ginger-bread nuts.

I remember cycling across Dartmoor from Teignmouth on a very hot August afternoon, and after an interminable pushing of the machine up the hill and feeling very thirsty and tired, descending into the valley on the other side and reaching Widecombe, where I got the finest tankard of cider I think I have ever drunk. Cider to be good must be drunk straight from a cool cask and in the country where it is made, just as all Vin du Pays, Vino de Pasto, or whatever you like to call it, must be drunk where it is made. I want none of the bottled stuff—which is best used with a glass of curacoa, some borage and peeled fruit and a bottle of soda-water as Cider cup—you drink that in the reek of the town with its metallic tang and false effervescence. And as for that liquid disguised with golden foil to look like Champagne—well, if you can arrange to obtain one dry enough and throw in a good glass of brandy, you might manage to deceive some people into thinking they were drinking very bad Champagne. And as some of the cheap sparkling wines of France are as a matter of fact half cider, you would not be far wrong.

Cider takes us to beer, good British beer, such as one finds—or hopes to find—in old country inns. To drink good Bass with the bitterness and aroma of the hop in its bitter

Reminiscences of an Epicure

ale, is a thing to look back and forward to, but it is rare to find it in its unbottled state. I used to like the Norfolk brew on draught, Lacon's generally, in preference to the usual well-known proprietary brands, and a brimming jug of this carried to one's boat for lunch on one of Norfolk's many rivers, was good drinking after a morning's hard work. So the men, fishing from their boat anchor'd in mid stream seem to think. They bring the beer in big tins, and if you watch one of the boats as you pass and before you are out of sight, you will invariably see one of the fishermen take up a glass and drink off a good bumper. Fishing must be thirsty work.

So too on one's holiday in the West country, the beer of Devon and Somerset always seems a little better than it is somewhere else, and beer calls for Cheddar Cheese, and Cheddar Cheese from Cheddar in Somerset calls for beer, and like turtle calling turtle they mate delightfully—and it is all part of the West Country that gave us Drake and the May-flower.

Once upon a time—it is quite a fairy story—I obtained from the Army & Navy Stores a cask of beer from Shepton Mallet, which of course is also in Somerset. I cannot recall at this time the name of the brewer. It was a delightful brew with a rich deep clear amber colour, full-bodied, brimming over with flavour, and all that you ever imagined that beer ought to taste like. I remember that we gave some to a thirsty workman. His eyes stood out of his head. "Gosh, that's beer. Where did you get that, Sir, if I may ask. 'Tain't like the stuff what they usually gives us". Some time after it was finished, with a new summer approaching, I thought I would order some more. "Sorry, unobtainable" said the shopman. "The brewers went bankrupt and their stock has been sold up". The corollary is that if you do not want to go bankrupt, do not make good beer.

It is of course purely a matter of personal taste, but I do not like beer in the house. Beer always seems to me to be something to drink in company; it is a convivial and friendly

Wines

drink and calls for company and convivial surroundings. Though, mark you, I do not despise a good bottle of Bass or Worthington and especially a Guinness with one's supper when one wants a friend inside one to help remove 'that tired feeling'. Beer, unlike Guinness, should never be drunk in a glass but always from a shiny pewter mug with a glass bottom—and if it has a frog on the glass at the bottom, well, so much the merrier!

As for Pilsner or Municher—of course you can drink it in England, and it is nice for lunch served in big round glasses on stems, but it is quite a different drink to that lager abroad—or Bock—served in tall frosted glasses and consumed sitting outside, and not inside, your haven of refreshment. Outside, that is the word. All good Pilsner must be drunk in the open air, and no one knows better than a German or an Austrian or, as we must say now, a Czecho Slovakian, how to drink it.

As for whisky in Scotland—who in the Highlands would think of drowning good Scotch whisky in a bath of soda water? I have drunk whisky neat in a tumbler, a good half or three quarters' tumbler-full, after a long tramp over the mountains, and it has been like a glass of milk with a lowlander. It is of course not the manufactured product from a bottle, but a home-made blend of old standing—the cask stood in a cool out-of-the-way corner and drawn from, when required, and continually refreshed with newer full-strength whisky. Professor Saintsbury tells everyone to do this if they want really good mellow whisky, but it was difficult to get started even when whisky was not thirty-five shillings a bottle.

And of course your ideal whisky is never one of the proprietary malt and grain blendings. Only Englishmen like it that way, probably because they have never had the opportunity to drink a pure malt made in a pot still. Some of the very best whisky I ever had was from my friends in Perth. A very good substitute was a Glenlossie-Glenlivet, ten year old vatted Highland malt, and old Mortlach, which I think comes from Skye. Whisky should not be too old as it becomes soapy,

Reminiscences of an Epicure

especially the blended variety. As regards the popular brands, there are some thirty or more of them, and I would prefer not to differentiate between them, though I used to think that 'Antiquary' sold by J. & W. Hardie contained more pure malt than the others.

Being a drinker of pure malt whisky in preference to a blend, it is more easy to pass to Irish and like it. Can a philologist please tell us why whisky is spelt 'whiskey' when you get across the Irish Channel? Dunville and Roe and Power are good, but I think I like John Jameson best, and it is procurable to-day I am glad to say without any difficulty. I have found that Irish whiskey and Scotch pure Malt go further than the blends and are therefore more economical, as it takes less of the smoky malty liquid to flavour a glass of soda water. I am of course speaking as a barbarian and Englishman in mentioning soda water. As I said, no self-respecting Scotsman in the Highlands would think of disgracing his national drink with it, and as for an Irishman, well, all he will take with it is a little soft water from one of his bogs.

There is nothing much to say about Gin and Rum. Gin seems now to be the most popular drink of our younger generation, judiciously flavoured with Angostura or lime-juice or made into a cocktail—a spirit that in better days we hardly considered respectable and was mainly patronized by midwives and—to use Monsieur Berzelius Nibbidard Paragot's expression—"by the worst washerwoman who ever breathed gin into a shirt-front". Rum can be acquired as a taste, and its bouquet always seems to me rather enchanting and reminds one of buccaneers and pirates and the South Seas. As a drink I have preferred the finer Cuban variety Baccardi, mixed with ice and limes and soda-water and drunk through a straw on a hot day. But it is a good flavour-mixer, and a French rum baba is good, and so is a rum omelet all ablaze with its pretty blue flames.

I never went very deeply into the matter of Cognac, presum-

Wines

ably because I have always had a penchant towards trying out all the different kinds of flavours in liqueurs, and I make this confession knowing that every connoisseur or writer of books on wines will always affect to despise liqueurs and to say that there is only one liqueur in the world for him, and that is a Vieux Cognac. Personally I was content always to keep in hand a bottle or two of 1865 or 1875 Denis Mounié and Bisquit Dubouché, and very much I enjoyed an occasional sip of either of these, but, when I do drink brandy, I must again confess to being unorthodox and say that I prefer the fuller and rather more stately bearing of Armagnac, a more masculine drink than Cognac, which I would call a real feminine brandy. So you see I am not worthy to talk a lot about Cognac.

Cherry Brandy, when good brandy could be bought under five shillings a bottle, was a fine thing to make and keep. I used to make two kinds—one with Morella cherries on which one left a half-inch stalk, filling a kilner jar with the fruit and sugar, equal weight of each, and then filling up the jar with brandy. Opened at Christmas, it was always a question which one liked best—the cherries to eat or the brandy to drink. The other kind I used to make with wild cherries which are exceedingly bitter, with all stalks pulled off and pricked, to which I would add a few black cherries to give the brandy a colouring, then equal weight of sugar, and the jar filled up with brandy. This should be kept a good six months and shaken daily before straining off the brandy and bottling it, throwing the cherries away of course in this case.

I have always liked Heerings Copenhagen Cherry Brandy, but the modern variety cannot be compared with the two bottles of the same which I had had forty years in bottle and were amongst the wines I bought from Mr. Cox of Dundee. There were also the two bottles of Kummel, and the superlative softness and flavour of this Kummel were unbelievable. Do not tell me again, Mr. Wine-merchant, that spirits do not improve in bottle. I remember I had quite an argument about

Reminiscences of an Epicure

it once with Charles Walter Berry, but in the end he did acknowledge that I was right about the Cherry Brandy and perhaps some liqueurs, but he would not depart from his dictum that any amount of age in bottle will not improve Cognac.

Sloe Gin was an especial favourite of mine when gin was between three and four shillings a bottle, and I made it every year, following a recipe from an old member of my family.

Three quarters fill a 3 lb. kilner jar with sloes; prick them well all over, having I hope previously picked them yourself from the bush, or if there were no bush, having bought them. Fill the jar to the top with granulated sugar, then with unsweetened gin. Close up. Shake the jar well three or four times a days for the next three or four weeks. Then repeat. Strain off the liquid, throwing the sloes away. Gather or buy or have ready from your earlier purchase a fresh amount of sloes. Do not prick these. Fill the jars to the top, fill up with the previously strained gin, adding a small amount of new gin if necessary to fill up the jars. Tighten down and store for six months, shaking daily. Strain and bottle and keep if you can for at least a year before opening a bottle. This is the hardest part of the task.

I have a predilection for drinking a liqueur out of a port glass—not a little drop at the bottom of a big glass as they give it to you in a restaurant, nor served in pretty little liqueur glasses, but a lot of it in a full glass. We used to have Benedictine like that in our Mess before the 1914 War, and it was an awfully good drink. You really felt that you were drinking something. Benedictine always strikes me as the most pleasant, suave and soothing of liqueurs. It is, or was, the favourite liqueur of certain ladies who ought to know. "I'll just have a Benedictine, dearie"—or perhaps it would be a Crème de Menthe.

All the Curacoas are good—brown, green and white. It is of course only a matter of colouring. Golden brown seems however the most natural, and Grand Marnier, its rich rela-

Wines

tion, is of course always golden-brown. Cointreau is a liqueur that has gained a foremost footing to-day, due largely to its being the necessary constituent for two of the pleasantest cocktails, the 'Sidecar' and the 'White Lady'. It is a very satisfactory liqueur standing on its own merits. Cordial Medoc is a favourite liqueur of many, but is not always easy to obtain.

One of the most seductive liqueurs to-day is 'Van der Hum', which is comparatively cheap, and in old days when liqueurs were still expensive and brandy was cheap, one could make quite a good Van der Hum oneself, using cognac and oranges and a little cinnamon. Maraschino never seems to me very satisfactory taken by itself; it is a cooking liqueur and is only at its best when poured over a pineapple. Its relative, Kirsch, is better, and its other relative, Prunelle, better still.

Crème de Menthe appeals to people no doubt who like to suck bulls' eyes, but one of the most marvellous drinks is Crème de Menthe frappé—a port glass filled with crushed ice, on which the liqueur is poured up to the top, and the whole sucked through two straws: a grand drink at the end of supper after the theatre. Curacoa is also good served in the same way.

Another liqueur that requires a little extra attention is Crème de Cacao, which should of course never be drunk as it is, but served with a layer of thick cream poured gently on the top. And one must not omit Vielleure, one of the most delicious liqueurs in the world, gradually becoming known a little more in England, but always popular in its own country. And lastly—after a brief remembrance of our own native liqueur, Drambuie, which goes largely to America, with its memories of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the '45—we reach the two Chartreuses, Green and Yellow.

I do not agree with Professor Saintsbury's little joke that all Yellow Chartreuse would be Green if it could. Whilst the Green does possess a most wonderful and unique flavour, not to mention its overpowering bouquet, it is very fiery and hot and has no gently suavity about it, whereas the Yellow is soft

Reminiscences of an Epicure

and mellow and clinging, and with a delicious flavour rather akin to Cointreau, and I personally prefer it as the pleasanter of the two monastic brothers.

Advocaat—I am not a Dutchman, but no doubt there must be Englishmen who like it; and as for absinthe, well it is not a liqueur at all, though sold as such. I have drunk it as a liqueur in bravado with no ill effects, and a silly sort of drink it was. How different to absinthe prepared in the proper way and drunk in peace and contemplation as an aperatif, which it is, and a prelude to a dinner to come. And this is how a Frenchman would prepare it.

The big wine glass, the green devil at the bottom, the little silver spoon across the top of the glass with a lump of sugar on it. The ice-water poured gently drop by drop on the sugar, until the sugar has all melted down into the glass, and then the supreme moment when you remove the spoon, and fill up your glass with the ice-water, and it all turns into a glorious milkiness. Little green devils and worse—that is what you see if you have too much of it.

A very good mixed liqueur is vodka and maraschino—about two-thirds of the glass first filled with vodka and the rest of the glass then filled up with maraschino. For many years it was my favourite liqueur, and I claim the invention of it. The 'Italian Flag' liqueur, a *pousse-café* made for you by an Italian wine-waiter, is interesting: one third *Crème de Menthe* at the bottom of the glass; one third White Curacao or Cointreau poured very gently with a small spoon on the *Crème de Menthe*, so that it does not mix, and the remaining third the pinky-red *Tangerinette*, similarly poured gently on the white—a very pretty liqueur. A still more pretty and more wonderful liqueur is a *pousse-café* made with seven or eight liqueurs in the same way, but to do this correctly requires a knowledge of the specific gravity of all the liqueurs, so that they rest on each other and do not mix.

So much has been written on cocktails, and there are so many books on them by experts, that it is a waste of time to

Wines

discuss them here. They are all good and you are told that they are all a wicked prelude to good wine. My advice is to drink your cocktail, whether you are at home or out-of-doors, either at mid-day with a biscuit, or in the evening "when the pubs open". Then, when eight o'clock comes, your palate will have sufficiently recovered the shock to receive that Chateau Lafite or Chateau d'Yquem with no guilty feelings.

There are other mixed drinks much less deleterious and all delightful. One of the most successful is a John Collins; the gin and fresh lime-juice, or lemon, at the bottom of the tumbler, with the sugar and ice, filled up with soda-water and drunk on a very hot day through two divine straws.

Pimms No. 1 Cup, now sold and known extensively, was once upon a time something that you could only get at Pimms in the Poultry, and then only when an occasion arose upon which you desired to make merry and at the same time knew that you had no important business to do in the office when you got back. It was, and is, served always in pint tankards with its large spray of borage. When properly made, according to directions, with fizzy lemonade, a slice of lemon, ice and the borage, it has the smell of the damp banks of a stream and the meadow-sweet that grows there, and the taste is of something sweeter than either.

Of the ordinary mixed drinks I suppose there is no combination so successful as shandy-gaff, imbibed at a country inn after a long ramble, with half of it good light ale from a cool cellar and the other half that old fashioned ginger beer in stone bottles. Never put ice into shandy-gaff. Gin and ginger ale are also a good marrying pair, but then what can you not do with gin nowadays?

The last mixed drink, which I do not recommend, is Matrimony. It was originally mixed port and sherry and was popular, it is said, in Victorian days. It is useful at any rate—and hereby hangs a tale.

There arrived late one afternoon at my house, when I was not there, a cousin bringing two women friends. They had

Reminiscences of an Epicure

been shopping in Kensington High Street, and they were very tired. My wife hurried to the dining-room to give them some refreshment. Alas, there was nothing to speak of in any of the decanters. But one of them contained a little Port, the second a little Sherry, and the third a little Marsala. So what did she do but pour them all together into a jug, give them a good shaking and having done that, she poured the mixture back into one of the decanters and brought it in.

"Delicious!" they all exclaimed. "Didn't I tell you", said our relative turning to her friends, "that my cousin would give you something good to drink; she always has such lovely wines".

I wonder what they thought they had been drinking!

CHAPTER 8

Bootlegging Days

The most interesting fact about the experiment in prohibition of alcohol in America was that it was no experiment at all. There was always any amount of alcohol to be bought anywhere, in quantity if not in quality.

Bootlegging days are interesting days to gossip over, and I lived through two years of them in New York. To one who was a drinker of good wines in the years before, the experience was particularly interesting in showing the make-shifts one had to accept to obtain some semblance of the old and normal life.

I arrived in New York on a day of thick fog in November 1922, and leaving the 'Majestic' at about one o'clock my office friend took me to lunch at the Marguerite Restaurant on Park Avenue, and I put in an appearance at my new office on the 36th floor of the Woolworth Building at about three o'clock.

I had not been there an hour before my first visitor arrived. It was the office bootlegger. What did I want? "Well, what have you got?" "Everything!" And a typed list was handed to me. Plenty of different brands of Champagne and Whisky and Gin. Not a good selection of wines; still, plenty to choose from. I made a selection and gave an order for delivery at my hotel. Within an hour a neat little package was brought in to me. I opened it; it contained a bottle of Scotch Whisky "with Mr.—'s compliments", and when I returned to my hotel, there on my bedroom floor was a wooden box, packed with string and brown paper, containing a selected dozen of the best. And the bill came in a few days later in the usual way. A good beginning.

The most useful thing I bought in England before I left for America was a silver flask made to hold a good half-pint,

Reminiscences of an Epicure

and curved and shaped so that it fitted closely into the hip. One took it when one went out to dine in restaurants; in one or two instances it was frowned on by a few law-abiding—or easily frightened—Americans, but there seemed something in the atmosphere against drinking alcohol with one's meals, and as far as I was told by my American friends the mass of the people when dining out before prohibition did not drink alcohol—a little beer perhaps and the foreigners drank wine—but America is too near the traditional ancestry of the early colonist and the backwoods to want to drink spirits whilst eating. The saloon is the proper place for that.

One drank many kinds of funny hootch in America during those times. Every Saturday and Sunday the fire engines raced through the streets. "Another still exploded", people said quite casually. But I acquired a great liking for the two-year-old Scotch whisky my bootlegger obtained for me, always the best well-known brands and no faking or wood-alcohol added to them. When I eventually arrived back in England I remember that the first thing I did was to buy a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label. "Now, at last", I said, "I shall get something old and worth drinking". The first glass was all wrong; I added more whisky—in fact I am ashamed to say that I drank more than half the bottle, and still there was something wanting. I missed the 'kick' in it to which I had been accustomed in my two-year-old. And I still miss it.

There was plenty of Rye Whisky to be bought for the asking, but it is a taste that requires a good deal of acquiring. One day one of my office clerks came to me and told me that a friend who had something to do with a distillery had told him that it was shortly going to be raided. For a long time it had been a matter of the State Police, but this time it was Federal Police, and that meant real business. So the distiller thought it time to move out and sell off stock. I bought two or three dozen of the most lovely old matured Rye Whisky—Bourbon I believe it was—and I acquired the taste for it, even

Wines

with soda-water. It is difficult to describe it, so beautifully mellow and dark and when drunk neat it had a suggestion of very old Rum with the characteristic Rum flavour removed. I bought Canadian Club Rye when I got back to England, but the mirage of that old New York Bourbon still remains in the distance.

Whilst I was being looked after by the office bootlegger and many good friends, my wife acquired her own wine-merchant. She was shopping at her grocer, when he offered her some Californian grape-juice. "Ah", she says, "I want the real thing". Upon which a couple of police stepped up.

"Excuse me, madame", one said. "If you wish to have a little wine or spirit, I have a little selection here which might interest you", and he proceeded to take out of his pocket a much thumbled and crumpled typed list. There was some good wine on it, as we found when the policeman-cum-wine-merchant delivered our purchase.

There was always plenty to drink in one's home, and it came by devious ways. For instance, one of my Italian clerks sold me a lot of red wine which he had made himself, and it was quite good. I was somewhat worried to think of the conditions under which it was probably made in a small Brooklyn apartment.

My stock drink for dessert was Jewish sacramental wine obtained by my bootlegger through a Rabbi who was glad to turn over an honest (sic) penny. It was very sweet and luscious, a pale golden colour, nothing like our Tent; it was probably a light Malaga, or perhaps an indigenous wine from the vineyards of Rishon in Palestine.

One of the ways in which Port could be obtained is interesting. There arrived one day at my apartment door the janitor, struggling with a barrel which he dumped perspiring at my feet and departed with languishing looks. It was a present from a mining friend in California, and he stated in a letter delivered the same day that he was sending me a cask of grape-juice. "Read the directions on the barrel carefully",

Reminiscences of an Epicure

he wrote, "and do exactly opposite to what it says, and you will have a perfect cask of port wine". So far so good.

The first direction was: "Be careful not to take out the bung, or the contents will start to ferment". That sounded hopeful. So I placed the barrel into a comfortable position in the kitchen, supported on a couple of packing-cases and proceeded forthwith to disobey the direction. Nothing happened until the next day, when our coloured maid-of-all-work came in.

"Musser-me, what hab you dere, Modom", she exclaimed. "It sure sounds as if it be goin' to 'splode!"

"No, that's all right", I said. "That's what it's meant to do".

The next day we were rather late in rising when there was a repeated banging on the door. It was our friend the janitor.

"There's something leaking in one of your rooms, mister", he said, "and it's coming through the ceiling on to the folks below".

We went into the kitchen, and there sure enough was our barrel gurgling and hissing and oozing with a glorious ruby liquid, and all the floor was covered with it.

"It's one of them tarnation things for booze-making. Who-soever's sent you that I guess is some hill-billy who ought to know better. Ain't there any directions?"

"Yes", I said, "there they are, and he tells me I must do exactly the opposite to what it says".

He went into fits of laughter. "Take the beastly thing away", I said, "and good luck to you!"

Which he proceeded to do. Some time afterwards he brought along a bottle and we sat down, and he poured out a couple of glasses.

"Good stuff!" I said.

"Yep", he answered.

"So you managed to put a snaffle on the beast. I've lost a good thing, I suppose".

"Serve you right, mister, for doing what it says you didn't oughter!"

Wines

He went down stairs highly pleased with himself, and it was my first and last experience as a vintner.

For ordinary beverage purposes—outside Whisky and Gin—Chianti was always the most dependable wine. The best Chianti I ever drank in my life—in Italy, England or anywhere else—was a case of a dozen litre flasks which I had in New York. The particular bootlegger I bought it from was a young South American of a good Colombian family and curiously enough he had been educated at Manchester University. He had been attending the Italian Hospital in New York as a medical student, when he was seized with the bootlegging get-rich-quick idea, just as other men throw everything to the wind and go and join a stampede to a new gold field. He did very well and obtained some first-class goods, but later on he wrote to me that the trade had become too violent for him and there was too much shooting amongst the gangs that ran the 'booze-racket'. So he became a medical student again.

But this digression has taken us some way from Chianti. I suppose that it was the connection of course with the Italian Hospital that enabled him to sell to his clients the most perfect Chianti one could obtain, and which became my standby during latter months in America—deliciously flavoured full wine and with a good age in flask—bought in large quantity and intended for the old Italian poor in New York, who I expect had plenty of it. It was indeed the nectar of the gods.

During the hot summer months, when one was forced to remain in New York for business, I used to make Ginger Ale Cup. I evolved it out of bare necessity, and it was delicious. I recommend it to anyone wanting an economical drink. This was my recipe.

Two or three bottles of Ginger Ale—'Canada Dry', incidentally a better and more dry ginger ale than is sold in England ('Canada Dry' has now arrived on the market here).

Reminiscences of an Epicure

The same number of bottles of Soda water 'White Rock'.

A port glass of gin to give it a kick.

Half a port glass of any liqueur one had, to give it a flavour.

Quarter of a port glass of rye or other whisky, if one had no brandy.

Strawberries and cherries, to cheer it up.

Cucumber rind, as I never saw borage in America.

A slice or two of oranges or peaches

Sugar to taste.

The whole well iced in the refrigerator. The soda water opened only when just about to be served, and then poured into the jug which contained the other ingredients. Put three or four cubes of ice into the jug.

It was never difficult to obtain the best liqueurs during prohibition, and I was seldom without Cointreau or Yellow Chartreuse. However I kept up my practice from earlier days and made some very good damson gin, in the same way as the sloe gin. I had Robert's cocktail book with me and made many different cocktails for my American friends, which seemed to interest them greatly. When you went out to dine, it seemed that your friends could never get beyond a Manhattan, that Orange-cum-Rye Whisky shake-up, which I think must be positively in the Yankee blood.

On the whole prohibition was nothing else but nonsense, aggravating one in many petty ways, such as the inability to have a drink with one's lunch at a down-town club when one happened to feel tired after a heavy morning's work. It was probably the glass of harmless beer that was missed the most. The result was of course that every executive kept 'booze', as it was usually called, inside an office filing cabinet, and brought it out for a business friend who had run over from Chicago to have a business chat. One drank it in lily-cups, the papier maché things for drinking the ice-water on tap in every office.

Personally I do not care for a drink from a cup, the china variety, which was sometimes given you when dining in a

Wines

public restaurant—but as the wine was seldom good, what did it matter? When dining my guests in a hotel dining-room I preferred the custom of serving Champagne in small plain tumblers, keeping the Champagne bottle under the table, and having two or three half-empty ginger ale bottles on the top. The good one-hundred-per-cent Yankee at the next table could then see nothing to complain of.

It always struck me as extraordinary that an American could break the law many times daily, drinking in his office, going to a 'speak-easy' or having a drink at his home, and would then say, as one of my close friends said to me:

"The Volstead Act, the Eighteenth Amendment—it is part of our Constitution and cannot be abrogated. It is a wonderful law".

"Thank goodness", I said in reply, "In England we only use water to wash in".

But there were some genuine Americans who thought that prohibition was a moral step forward, and they could not see that it was actually having precisely the opposite effect on the population. It was good for the working classes, it speeded work, and therefore it was good for the factory. "It is the law", said one of them to me, "and I obey it insofar as I have no dealings with bootleggers".

But he came along all the same with a big black bag when I left America for England, and bought up all the 'booze' which of course I could not take with me.

FOOD

“A great number of fat Waiters and Tenders
laden with Baskets, Dossers, Hampers,
Dishes, Wallets, Pots and Kettles”.

Rabelais.

CHAPTER 9

Whatever shall we Eat?

Let us sit down together—you and I, old stagers perhaps, one or both of us, with a dyspeptic regimen forced on us by time and a hard doctor—and we will discuss the matter of good ‘Belly-timber’ as Rabelais calls it. We will think of the days when Mrs. Beeton’s “Take ten eggs’ was common kitchen parlance and cream was to be got for the asking, when really good Claret cost twenty-eight shillings a dozen, and when a matter of four or five Havanas a day was mere bagatelle.

We are living now in the ‘Canned Age’—the age of tinned sausages and Luncheon Meat and the ubiquitous pilchard, an age that tolerates a foreign ham, taken out of a tin, which dares to pull a long nose at York, and is then cut into vulgar slices for us on a machine.

And this is how the Archdeacon breakfasted in Trollope’s days a hundred years ago:

“The tea consumed was the very best, the coffee the very blackest, the cream the very thickest; there was dry toast and buttered toast, muffins and crumpets; hot bread and cold bread, white bread and brown bread, home-made bread and bakers’ bread, wheaten bread and oaten bread; and if there be other breads than these, they were there; there were eggs in napkins, and crispy bits of bacon under silver covers; and there were little fishes in a little box, and devilled kidneys frizzling on a hot-water dish; which by-the-by, were placed closely contiguous to the plate of the worthy Archdeacon himself. Over and above this, on a snow-white napkin, spread upon the sideboard, was a huge ham and a huge sirloin; the latter having laden the dinner table on the previous evening. Such was the ordinary fare at Plumstead Episcopi”.

And to what have our breakfasts deteriorated now? Our young people just pour some milk on flakes out of a card-

Reminiscences of an Epicure

board box and call it a meal. And they are quite satisfied.

Yet the old British idea of getting up at seven and cramming oneself with porridge and bacon and eggs and marmalade at eight did seem rather violent measure for breaking a fast, and the continental method of a postponed breakfast-lunch, 'déjeuner à la fourchette', at half past eleven or twelve, with a cup of coffee and roll, a 'premier déjeuner', at eight—equivalent to our early morning cup of tea with bread and butter—does seem the most sensible way of doing things. It is not to be wondered at that modern youth is merely improving, in their opinion, on the early tea and bread-and-butter idea, and are taking the more vitamin'd dish of flakes, to be followed by the real 'breakfast or déjeuner at mid-day. The full Victorian Sunday breakfast at nine, followed by the Sunday joint at one—plus two vegetables and Yorkshire pudding and apple tart, was, and is, an ordeal. So I am all for the flakes idea, except that I am old-fashioned enough to prefer to take my flakes in the form of good Scotch porridge. "Yep, I guess oatmeal is the best cer-e-al for breakfast", as my Yankee friends say, drawling over that word 'cer-e-al' through their noses.

But, talking about American breakfasts, you must not try at an American hotel to get an English dish of 'Kidneys and Bacon'. They will come up, kidneys on one dish, and bacon on another, and charged separately on the bill as two separate dishes. I discovered that the ideal American breakfast, such as the high executive or head salesman orders, is something like this:

First course. Baked apple, or prunes, or grape-fruit.

Second course. Oatmeal and cream, or one of the other cer-e-als.

Third course. Scallops and Beechnut bacon, or English mutton-chop.

Fourth course. Bar-le-duc conserve and toast.

Served with Costa Rica coffee and cream, and of course a glass of ice-water.

Food

An American baked apple is unlike its English counterpart. It is cooked in deep molasses. English brown treacle will do, or the dark moist Barbadoes sugar. Put the apples after coring in a deep casserole dish with the molasses, treacle or brown sugar and a little water at the bottom. Cook in a very slow oven for about an hour with the lid on, basting from time to time. Take out of oven and place on dish, basting from time to time as the apples cool. Serve cold with or without thin cream.

A delicious American breakfast dish—and for that matter at any other time—is ‘Scallops and Bacon’. The scallops are cut in small squares, dipped in egg and breadcrumbs and fried, and served with the fried or grilled bacon. ‘Beechnut’ bacon is a bacon that is always firm, crisp and delicious.

‘English mutton chop’ is a mutton chop with the bone taken out, wrapped round a kidney, skewered or secured by string, and grilled or fried. In America you eat your chop without a bone, and ten to one your steak will have the bone instead.

Americans have a great liking for the little French Bar-le-duc conserves—white currant, raspberries, mirabelles. They do not eat marmalade. “You Britishers and your marmalade pots!”

Costa Rica coffee poured very hot on the cream is better than what you obtain in England and is nearly as good as French coffee as made in France.

And do not forget—and you will not be allowed to forget—the glass of ice-water. I cannot understand an American asking for it in England. But the moment one sets foot on American soil, it becomes second nature to drink it—I suppose it is the atmosphere—and there is nothing nicer than a boiling sip of coffee followed by a sip of ice-water. No wonder Americans die of indigestion!

It has been a generally accepted idea that the fashions and customs of the upper classes become those of the middle and lower classes in the next succeeding generation, and that this is what keeps the world of fashion turning. Be that as it

Reminiscences of an Epicure

may, it seems that the reverse is now the order of the day in England, and that a majority of people accept the standards of the masses. The big mid-day meal, no late dinner, and a high tea at six-thirty when the workers get home is an example of this. And the men's fashions—no gloves, no stick—are another, quite apart from the departure of the morning coat and top hat. And women must wear over their heads scarves just like the Lancashire mill girls. And just look at the stalls of the theatre—in the possession of a rabble without evening dress. And so on.

A curiously different arrangement has eventuated on the other side of the Atlantic. Here the feeding arrangements are nothing but the habits of the lower classes of Europe promoted to an 'nth' degree of refinement. I could not help noticing it the first time I went to America, and I remarked on it to a European friend who was very attached to America, and he seemed quite to resent my criticism. There is for instance the little pat of butter in a little separate side-dish which you peck at with a special little silver knife during the whole of the meal and spread it on your roll, instead of the usual piece of dry roll or bread; the entire absence of egg-cups, and a boiled egg is eaten 'shirred'—the lower class habit of feeding children on an egg stirred into a cup—I went to every china shop and general stores in New York and could not buy an egg cup. Then there is the habit of serving a piece of cheese with one's apple-pie—a Lancashire or Yorkshire custom I think amongst the masses; not to mention 'waiters' language' for quite ordinary things—'demi-tasse' for a black coffee for instance.

What a different world to-day is the ordinary home-caterer's, as compared with the past when everyone had a cook, who did do her best to study a cookery-book and evolve something out of Mrs. Beeton. And as for Monsieur Escoffier and Mrs. Marshall—you can read Escoffier's masterpiece of kitchen lore, just as you read Brillat-Savarin, as a literary entertainment, and very interesting it is, but who could manage to spare

Food

time and energy to-day to evolve even once a week one of the wonderful dishes that are described in it? It seems to describe a world of 'good eats' quite outside the humdrum fare in one's own home, and in these days we can only touch the bare fringe of it in a restaurant.

For instance—all those sauces—Béchamel and Hollandaise and the rest. Suffice it that we have, and know how to make, a plain white sauce, and to temper it with lemon, vinegar, parsley, onion, or egg, as the occasion arises, and with this we pursue our insular way through the whole gamut of cookery in England—a country which, as they used to say, "has so many religious denominations and only one source" (I believe this was Voltaire, but I am not quite certain).

Good wine we must have with good cuisine—but we must be very careful what we serve with our best Bordeaux, when even Frenchmen will serve only a plain gigot de mouton. Says Rabelais:

"Gammons of Bacon, both of Westphalia, Mayence and Bayone; with store of dried Neats tongues, plenty of Links, Chitterlings and Puddings in their season; together with salt Beef and Mustard, a good deal of hard rows of powdered mullet called Botargos, great provision of Sauciges". What did his fellow-countrymen drink with all these good things, I should like to know, in the reign of good King Grangousier?

The worst of it is that all these nice things are in the shops and not in one's own larder—with the exception perhaps of a certain quantity of tinned goods. So on a Monday or Tuesday if suddenly and unexpectedly old friends 'blow in', you are hard put to in finding something for them to eat, and 'pot-luck' is something like this. All you have in the house is:—

Some old cheese.

Two rashers of bacon.

An egg.

Potatoes, onions and perhaps a carrot or two.

Jam of course.

A tin of sardines or pilchards.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

A couple of tomatoes, or a eucumber, or at least a tin of peas.
Some slices of sausage bought for your supper, or left-over
meat (not very likely) or a tin of 'Luncheon Meat'.
.

A bottle or half-a-syphon of soda water or some ginger ale.
A bottle of beer, or a bottle of lemon or orange squash.
A drop of Brandy, or Sherry, or Gin.

And this is the Menu of the dinner which you give your
friends:

Hors d'Oeuvres variés
Lancashire hot-pot
Rolled jam omelet
Welsh rarebit
Iced cup 'Surprise'

And this is how you make it.

Hors d'oeuvres consists of:

Sardines or slices of pilchards.

Potato salad.

Sliced tomatoes in vinegar.

Cucumber sliced or peas or beans, from a tin, sweetened.

Croutons of fried bread, size of half-crown, with one slice of
the sausage or luncheon meat finely chopped with a little
raw onion, put on top.

Lancashire hot-pot: Take the slices of sausage or luncheon
meat and place in a casserole with the bacon rashers cut
in smallish pieces, onions (previously fried), carrots or
tinned peas. Two or three potatoes thickly sliced. Grate
some cheese over it. Add sprinkled curry powder and a
little water. Cover the whole with small or halved potatoes,
previously half boiled. Cook in moderate oven, baste from
time to time. When cooked through, take lid off casserole
and allow potatoes to brown.

Rolled jam omelet. Use one egg (or more). Beat up with a
little milk and pour into pan on to the hot margarine; just

Food

before browning, tumble omelet on hot plate. Put a good wallop of jam in a line along centre of omelet, and fold it over.

Welsh rarebit. Everyone knows how to cook that. Mix some 'top of the milk' with the cheese.

Cup 'surprise'. Empty bottle of beer in a quart or larger jug. If you have no beer (and assuming you have no wine) mix up a pint of rather strong lemon or orange squash with water. Into this tumble a wine glass of brandy or sherry or gin or any other spirit or strong wine to give it a 'kick'. Cut two thin slices of tomato, and three or four slices of cucumber rind. If you have no cucumber, put in some lemon peel cut thin or a couple of geranium leaves. Add a pinch of nutmeg or mixed spice. Also slices of any fruit you have; even apple peel will do. Stand this in refrigerator. Also place in refrigerator bottle of soda water or ginger ale. If you have nothing 'fizzy', you will be reduced to Enos. When ready to serve, take out of refrigerator, put in some pieces of ice. Add the soda water or ginger ale, and serve. Your friends will think you have given them a very nice dinner.

CHAPTER 10

A Dissertation on Hors d'Oeuvres

One of the most interesting branches of cooking and one which any amateur can indulge in as a hobby is the making of hors d'oeuvres. Such cooking, as is necessary, is easy for anyone to do, and the result if properly carried out is artistic and gratifying to the sight as well as the taste, and has great potential uses owing to every dish being cold.

An hors d'oeuvre can be served in its proper place as the prelude to a dinner, or it can be usefully employed to-day as a complete lunch or supper and remain all conveniently waiting for use on the table or sideboard. A considerable amount of preparation and a good deal of ingenuity are necessary to achieve an aesthetic and pleasing result, and scope is given for invention and blending of flavours. It is quite curious to speculate on the mixtures of fish and meat and vegetables, sweet and vinegary oddments, and even prepared fruits that can be blended together on one plate, and experiment can lead to experiment with most bizarre results.

To make a satisfactory hors d'oeuvres, which will serve also as a complete lunch or as supper after the theatre, or as part of a Sherry or Cocktail party, a set or two of glass or china dishes must be bought, a glass tray holding six or eight oblong glass trays which fit into each other being the most satisfactory.

It is of course possible to buy your selection of hors d'oeuvres already made and ready for use from many of the big stores and delicatessens, and whilst some of these are useful as an adjunct on the day required, very often the necessity for an hors d'oeuvres is spontaneous, and anyone contemplating making them for ordinary home consumption at any time or for the unexpected guest, should in the first place lay in a stock of some such goods as the following, which can be bought and stored either in tins or glasses:—

Food

Sardines, practically a *sine qua non*.

Fillets of anchovy.

Rolled anchovies.

Norwegian herring fillets, the dark brown sort in oil or brine.

Shrimps or prawns.

Tunny or salmon, to be cut and served in small pieces.

Heinz vegetable salad.

Button mushrooms.

'Cocktail' onions

Fonds d'artichauds.

Piccalilli, especially cauliflower.

A bottle of Escoffier pickles.

Sweet gherkins, or other sweet pickles.

Olives.

Stuffed 'Manzanilla' olives.

Peas and French beans.

Haricot beans in tomato.

Two or three of the above tins or bottles can be opened at one time, and the rest of the six or eight different dishes served should be home-made as follows.

Potato salad. I suppose most people know something about this, but there is a right way and a wrong way to make it, and there are at least a couple of varieties.

Boil potatoes in their jackets; stop cooking before they break up and get mealy. Peel while hot and cut into half-inch slices whilst still hot. For ordinary potato salad cut these slices into nice squares, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, throwing away the badly-shaped ends. Make a sauce of oil and vinegar in equal proportions and add some Heinz salad dressing, or if you have none some cream, grate a little onion in it, some pepper and a pinch of sugar and salt. Mix it well together and stir in gently the warm potato cubes. When quite cold it will be ready for use.

For maître d'hôtel potato salad, cut the potatoes instead into half-inch thick full slices, cutting the potato cross-ways

Reminiscences of an Epicure

instead of long-ways. Make a sauce of salad oil, mixing it with some Heinz Mayonnaise or cream, to which add pepper and a little salt and some well chopped parsley. After mixing it well, empty the potato slices into it, and mix well gently, and when cold it is ready to serve.

Potato salad is not a dish to be made anyhow, and patience spent on it produces a dish which is so excellent that it is worth eating all by itself. What you buy is never half so good.

Stuffed eggs. Hard boil one or two eggs. Cut in half. Take out yokes, and mix them with anchovy essence or alternatively with any of the sauces, Escoffier or AI, add a pinch of salt and pepper. Then put back into the eggs. Garnish with small sprig of parsley.

Tomato. Slice a tomato thin and put a little vinegar on it. Sprinkle a little chopped parsley if you like.

Beetroot. Cut some beetroot into small cubes and pour a little vinegar on them.

Croutons. Fry small round croutons of bread the size of a half-crown, until brown and crisp. Take any bit of cold meat, chop very fine, add a little chopped raw onion, season to taste, and build up pyramid-fashion on the croutons. Garnish with a sprig or two of parsley.

Cabbage. Take out the innermost heart of a cabbage. Shred it very finely in its raw state.

Cucumber. Cut some slices of cucumber very thin and put a little vinegar over them.

Lettuce and orange. Take the heart of a lettuce, break into small pieces; cut some slices of orange into small pieces, the size of a three-penny bit. Mix with the lettuce and pour on it a little dressing of oil and vinegar mixed with a pinch of castor sugar.

Mushrooms. Sauté a few mushrooms. Chop into pieces. Pour over the pieces and mix well a little sweet white wine, Barsac or Graves: pepper and salt.

Food

Herrings. Slice a 'roll-mop' herring into small pieces; add some sliced cooked potato. Mix them with vinegar and sprinkle some chopped parsley over them.

Salami. Cut some very thin slices of salami sausage. Garnish with a sprig or two of parsley.

Salmi de fruit. Chop a slice or two of ripe pears, bananas and soft cooking apples into small cubes; add a little white vinegar, which has been peppered, and mix well together.

Before taking all the trouble to make an hors d'oeuvre preliminary to a dinner, remember that there is one hors d'oeuvre that is worth all the rest put together, and it is so majestic that no other hors d'oeuvre can come near it, and that is caviare. This of course wants no preparation, just a little side-plate of finely chopped onion.

There are two other forms of hors d'oeuvre which can be served alone before dinner, if you do not want to buy caviare at £9 a pound. One is sliced smoked salmon, and the other is plovers' eggs, or, as I think they have generated to-day into, gulls' eggs.

What to drink with our hors d'oeuvres? Why, Sherry of course, or a little Chablis or white Burgundy if you want a longer drink—or Champagne. When you have eaten up all my hors d'oeuvres, you will not want any dinner to follow!

Having now discussed our hors d'oeuvres, or as the word is becoming popular to-day, our Antipasto, we will take a jump to the end of our meal, and have a look at some cheese.

CHAPTER 11

Cheese and Why You Like It

I always think that cheeses look much nicer than they actually taste. I should like to have a collection of fine round cheeses cut in half, at which I could just sit and look; in fact, I know that the cheese counter at a big Stores or Provision merchant holds me in thrall when they are adequately displayed.

England on the whole makes as fine cheese, or finer, than many other countries, and many we do not see. Fancy having to go all the way to the dales of Yorkshire to have a picce of real matured blue Wensleydale, or to double the journey there and back to Gloucestershire before we can taste Double Gloucester. I suppose we must be thankful that we can still get Stilton.

Stilton is a curious cheese insomuch as it is best eaten with those thick round biscuits, very stupidly called 'Breakfast', rather than with good wholesome household bread. It seems to be sold all the year round nowadays, which is a mistake on the pleasant side. I always understood that it ripens normally for Christmas, which is a most meet and proper thing as it should be, especially since this young gentleman has in the course of his growing up imbibed a little of the juice of the grape. One likes to buy half a Stilton about October, when the mind is beginning to contemplate good Christmas fare to come, and keep it in a nice cool airy larder covered with a cheese-cloth and look at it from time to time, until the great day comes when it arrives at the table dressed in a nice clean table-napkin, and there is great joy in diving into its centre and scooping out the contents.

I may be unorthodox—and all Yorkshiremen at any rate will agree with me—but I think that Wensleydale is better than Stilton. It was always so creamy and looked so appetising with its slightly less blueness; it had all the rich qualities of

Food

Stilton combined with a *je-ne-sais-quoi* of its own. It mated better with bread than biscuit. Even in pre-war days it was difficult to get in London, and only a few special provision dealers would sell it. "Why?", I asked my grocer once. "Oh, because the ordinary man has never heard of it". Fancy going through your life with no other cheese in your head, or your mouth, but Cheddar; but that is the experience and taste of the multitude, and why should your grocer cater for anything more?

The ordinary Cheshire cheese could be very good sometimes, and is now on sale generally but lacking proper maturity, and Blue Cheshire is obtainable in some quantity. This latter is a nice flavoury cheese, but always strikes one as lacking creaminess, and is as good with bread as with a tasty cheese biscuit.

Cheddar? Cheddar can be very good, and on the whole the Cheddar cheese that was sold before the War was good and wholesome ordinary fare. It must be matured and it must of course be English. There always seems to be two kinds of Cheddar—what the grocers sell and what they sell you when you go to the village of Cheddar in the Mendips. The latter is delicious, and I suppose that, rather like Roquefort or Brie in France, it is stored and matured in their caves amongst all the stalactites and stalagmites. No wonder it becomes good, and that when you have duly bought one and put it in the car and got home with it you can treat it with the same respect as you pay to a Stilton.

As regards grocers' Cheddar, 'Finest Farmers' as it is called, it must be eaten with nice fresh bread cut in thick pieces; it must on no account have any butter with it and must emphatically be accompanied by good English beer.

During the War a nice old English clergyman and his wife thought it would be a patriotic act and a pleasant one in their loneliness to board a little boy bombed out of London. So a little lad of ten years old was sent down to them. To their surprise he would eat little or nothing ; he did not seem to

Reminiscences of an Epicure

relish the good food they had and which they gave him. "I want some cheese", he said. So they collected all their combined cheese rations, sent to the village, and a nice hunk of cheese was put down in front of him. The old clergyman and his wife were sitting at table, pleased to have got the lad what he fancied, and were waiting to see him "tuck into" what no doubt he had been accustomed to in his home.

He looked at his plate and he looked round the table, and his face assumed an incredulous expression. "Orl right", he said, "but where's the b . . . y beer?"

Many delightful English cheeses we used to get regularly. Red Leicester was one of these, delicious and creamily-soft, with a most entrancing flavour. A good deal of mustard must go into the make-up of Red Leicester, and as the cheese gets a little old after you have bought it, it tends to become hot and not so pleasant. It should therefore be eaten at once, and no more should be bought than can be eaten at the first meal. I can remember coming across it quite unexpectedly at an inn on the East coast, and it was at its very best accompanied by a good draught of Lacon's Norfolk ale.

Double Gloucester is a rather better known cheese, and it can be as good as Red Leicester, but has not got the other's extreme creamy consistency; it is a rather more workmanlike cheese and compares favourably with Cheshire at its best. Most of our English countryside makes its own cheeses, which find their way to the local market. I once tasted a by no means despicable variety of true Cheddar which emanated from the Mull of Kintyre. Where are Irish cheeses?

As regards cream-cheeses, England has never seemed very successful, the little Wilts cheese being rather on the sour side. A good sort of cheese, rather of the processed type is St. Ivel—a much sought after favourite, in the past and is still so to-day—and the only English double-cream cheese which used to come up to French Pommel, and in fact exceeded it in freshness, was one sold by Pimms in the Poultry—a largish cheese in muslin from which you could buy any

Food

weight you liked. This would go very well with oatmeal biscuits, accompanied by a glass of Claret—a favourite lunch for busy men at their stand-up counter in the City. How good some of the Normandy cream cheeses are with the wild or Alpine strawberries that are so common abroad and seldom if ever seen in England.

And now we come to the innumerable foreign cheeses. There are of course so many that it is difficult to choose what to mention and what to leave out, every country in Europe and elsewhere having its varieties and only comparatively few finding their way to the English market.

Camembert and Brie, the latter variety particularly on 'straw' are delicious. It is very difficult to choose a Camembert just right—not too hard to the touch, and not too soft and beginning to run inside. A mean between the two is to be looked for, and the shopman cannot always be relied on to give you a cheese that exactly meets your taste, and only practice in choosing the condition you like best yourself makes perfect. Pont l'Eveque is like a Camembert but not so good; Port de Salut, like Italian Bel Paese, are of one family likeness and prove a useful change. Roquefort, the first of French blue cheeses, but not to be compared with Stilton or Wensleydale, is delightful when it is well matured and blue. As it gets towards the rind and becomes white—this is what you should do with what you have left over from the first day, say two or three ounces.

Weigh it. Take the same weight in butter, not margarine. Put both on a plate together, take a fork and knead them well together until they are entirely mixed into a paste. Then add a little Armagnac brandy, or Cognac if you have not got Armagnac—which has a richer and fuller flavour—work it well into the mixed cheese and butter, then add a little more brandy—not too much or it will spoil it, but just enough to make a 'cream cheese'. Then put it together into a neatly shaped 'cheese'. Make some nice hot crisp toast and eat the cheese with the toast, spreading it with a knife as you eat it

Reminiscences of an Epicure

in the usual way, and you will have a dish fit for Brillat-Savarin. This is not my recipe, by the way; it was given me verbally by a once well known wine merchant.

The most distinctive foreign cheese is probably Gruyère. One used to know it in the past as Gruyère and under no other name, but owing probably to scarcity and to Italian and Dutch imitations, the true Swiss Gruyère appears to be now known as Emmenthal. There is only one thing to eat this cheese with to perfection, and that is French bread—the long very thin baton-shaped bread with the hard crisp crust and the big holes inside it, with a distinctive flavour that one can never forget. It is curious that this bread with the big holes in it goes best with the cheese of the same peculiar characteristics. The proper Gruyère can always be known by these large 'holes' and its colour which must be just 'off-white'. It must be eaten directly it is cut and brought home, as it soon goes off-colour and gets hard. If you are wise you will never buy more than a quarter of a pound at a time, that is if you do not exceed two in the family.

There remain amongst the foreign cheeses that are known in England Dutch (Edam), Danish blue and Italian Gorgonzola.

Dutch cheese is definitely not as good as it was in old days; there is nothing like the old flavour in it. As a boy I liked to take a quarter piece of the round red cheese and a penny loaf of new bread, all hot and crisp, and bicycle out of London, and when I had got out into the country it was good to sit by the roadside and munch it, the cheese in one hand and the bread in the other. Danish blue is an invention and seems a synthetic relic from the War.

Gorgonzola however plays on an old familiar note. It is the only cheese beyond Cheddar that has ever got to the 'common man', and it has always been the one stable-companion of Cheddar in every hotel and boarding-house in the country. It is a very old friend, with a lot of funny stories about it, and is at its best when over-ripe except for its rather unpleasant smell.

Food

There is one way of eating Gorgonzola which is not generally known and which I used to patronize many years ago, though through whom or where I got the recipe I do not know. Cut two thin slices of Gorgonzola off a big piece, both slices the same size. Spread one of them with butter, and put the other slice on the top to form a sandwich. No bread of course is required. Now light a Russian cigarette, and as you cut off and eat a piece of the Gorgonzola 'sandwich', inhale the smoke of the cigarette.

Voilà tout!

CHAPTER 12

Salmagundi

In the Realm of Endelechy, which was many days' sailing from the Lairdship of Salmagondin in Touraine, an Olla or dish of the incongruous mixture called a Podrida was put before Pantagruel and his gay companions, and this is what it consisted of:

"Several sorts of Pottages, Salads, Fricasees, Saugreences, Cabirotadoes, Rost and Boil'd-meat, Carbonadoes, swindging pieces of Powder'd-beef, good old Hams, dainty Somates, Cakes, Tarts, a world of Curds after the Morisk-way, fresh Cheese, Jellies, and Fruits of all sorts".

No doubt those gay roysterers had their fill of those good things, and so you and I, my friend, will do the same before we get to the end of this chapter. Pottages and salads and fricasees we know; Cabirotadoes may mean any little thing cooked by fire; Carbonadoes are 'pieces of meat cut crossways for broiling on coals'; I do not know what swinging or swaying pieces of beef reduced to powder could be like, but they bear apparently some affinity to the monastic way of life; and I know not what kind of curds the Moors do make, but no doubt it was common parlance in Rabelais' day, and many such things were made and hung in those wonderful kitchens of the Great 'where monks are always to be found'.

Meats and sweetmeats together are, as a rule, not good mixers in this country, and beyond our mutton and venison and hare with red currant jelly, or an apple sauce with duck and goose, we have little or no idea how to blend.

In the same way as you make an apple sauce, make a pear sauce and serve it with roast Pigeon. Then serve as a side-dish to eat with the pigeon a lettuce and orange salad and hot potato crisps, and you will have a lordly dish. So in the American way does hot cranberry sauce, which is actually a

Food

whole-fruit cranberry jam soured with lemon in it, go well with turkey, and a cold gooseberry conserve made with vinegar served as a relish with cold meats.

Some time in the history of dining and good food, the need of the 'Savoury' arose to dissipate the cloying sweetness of dessert, and so we separate by successive courses our *podrida* of mixed meats and sweetmeats.

Savouries form an interesting item in our cuisine—in the past if not so much in these inelegant days—and they call for the same ingenuity as *hors d'Oeuvres*. They are actually a version of the same idea—a sort of 'Fin d'Oeuvres' as one might say. Eggs, dried or tinned fish, and cheese are largely their constituents, and the general form of most savouries in the old days at dinner parties, was a small fried crouton of toast on which, by the use of a pestle and mortar and a forcing bag, a mixture of butter and different flavouring agents such as parsley, anchovy, kipper, haddock, shrimp, lobster or game, was in a decorative way placed on the crouton. Other more homely savouries were however used on ordinary occasions, and these in an enlarged form can usefully be used to-day as a supper dish or at the end of the usual two or three course dinner, instead of the more ordinary sweet or pudding course.

Here are a few choice savouries or supper dishes, easy to make and not usually in the cookery books:

Roes on Mushrooms. Obtain some large flat mushrooms and fry them. Take some soft herring roes, flour them and fry them. Put the roes on the mushrooms; the mushrooms on some fried croutons of bread cut thin. Pepper, salt and serve very hot. Very good indeed.

Marrow. Ask your butcher to give you some marrow bones, and request him of course to saw them in half. Cook upright in the oven, not too long or the marrow will melt; or boil, with a covering of paste, to keep the marrow in. They are of course best served as they are, in the old-fashioned way with a nice clean table-napkin round each bone, and the marrow

Reminiscences of an Epicure

scooped out with a marrow-spoon (which is the other end of the lobster fork) and eaten with dry toast. This is rather heavy going, and it is more daintly served with the marrow previously scooped out and spread on pieces of thin hot crisp dry toast, and eaten with a knife and fork.

Anchovy Eggs. Boil some eggs hard, take off shells and cut in half. Take out yolks and pound with anchovies from a tin, *not* anchovy sauce. Be careful to keep the whites of the eggs hot, and have ready hot fried croutons of toast. Put back the anchovy'd yolks, pepper and serve as hot as possible.

Brussels Sprouts. Here is a homely vegetable turned into something different. Boil some sprouts, drain and dry. Have ready a beaten egg; dip the sprouts into it and breadcrumb them well. Fry in the usual way, brown, and serve.

Cheese Ramequins. Put one and a half ounces of breadcrumbs and one ounce of butter into a basin and pour on it a gill of milk. Take nearly three ounces of grated cheese, the yolks of two eggs, some salt, cayenne pepper and made mustard, and add these to the breadcrumbs and butter, and mix thoroughly. Then take the whites of the eggs and beat them to a snow. Stir this in also, and pour the mixture into small ramequin cases about half way up and sprinkle on each a little of the grated cheese which you have kept by you. Bake in a moderate oven until well risen and brown.

Egg Ramequins. Grate some cheese and place a layer on the bottom of each small ramequin. Break an egg into each, and lay a pat of butter on it and a little cream. On this place another layer of cheese and finally cover with breadcrumbs. Brown in a hot oven.

Crawfish on Toast. Those tins of rather tough crawfish require a little manoeuvring. Empty a half-pound tin and cut up the crawfish into rather small pieces. Add a dessertspoonful of lemon juice and a tablespoonful of Worcester sauce. Salt and pepper with cayenne and add three or four ounces of margarine or butter. Do not stint this, as a lot depends on a good

Food

deal of margarine or butter to make the dish tasty. Mix all the ingredients well and heat up to boiling point, and serve on hot buttered toast.

Some more crawfish. Take the contents of the tin of crawfish and cut up into small pieces, measuring sufficient to fill two cups. Fry some mushrooms and chop up, sufficient to fill one cup. Chop up a green pepper into small pieces. Make an ordinary white sauce of two tablespoons of butter, a tablespoon of flour and a pint of hot rich milk. When the sauce is thick, stir into it the crawfish, mushrooms and pepper, and mix them well together. Place inside ramequin cases or deep scallop shells, sprinkle with breadcrumbs and brown in the oven. They will then be ready to serve.

Salmon in white sauce. The best of Canadian salmon requires a lot of attention. Take a good-sized soufflé dish and butter it well inside. Take the contents of the tin of salmon and add two eggs previously well beaten; mix well. Place a layer of breadcrumbs in the soufflé dish, then add a layer of the salmon mixture; dot it with butter, and repeat the process until about three-quarters full. Make a white sauce and pour it over the whole, and sprinkle well with more breadcrumbs. Dot all over with plenty of butter and bake about one hour in a moderate oven.

And now for a few special easily-made sweet dishes:

Coupe de pêche. Take good-sized Burgundy glasses. At the bottom of each place a square piece of fruit cake, and soak it well with Sherry. On this place a half or quarter of a peach, fresh or tinned; spread this over with a thick layer of strawberry jam (no other jam will do); whip up some cream and fill the glass to the top. Crown it with a glacé cherry.

Soufflé omelet. Have ready a frying pan on the fire with the butter melted sufficiently to cover well the bottom of the pan. Beat up the yolks of some eggs with a very little milk. Take the whites of the eggs and beat them up to a snow, adding a little fine sugar. Empty this into the other, mix and quickly

Reminiscences of an Epicure

pour into the frying pan. When the mixture has set and is just browning underneath, transfer it at once to a very hot plate, and put it under the grill, when it at once rises. Take it off, spread one half of it with strawberry jam (no other jam will do), fold the other half over on to it, and serve it as quickly as you can before the soufflé collapses.

Rum omelet. Beat up some eggs, yolks and white together, no milk added. Pour into frying pan hot with the melted butter. Fry for a minute or two and take off when it has set, but before it is browned. Roll it and transfer to very hot dish. Warm a full tablespoonful of rum, light it and pour over omelet, and endeavour to serve it whilst still alight. Sprinkle castor sugar over it.

Salad of a Hundred Delights. Take three raw oranges and three bananas, peel them and cut them into slices; add quarter of a pound of marshmallows, some finely chopped walnuts, half a pound of grapes, peeled and pips removed, a few stoned dates, and half a pint of crushed pineapple. Make a thick syrup and pour over whilst hot. Add a glass of sherry and mix well. When cold cover the whole with whipped cream, and if it does not give you a hundred delights I do not know anything else that will.

Strawberry-apple. Take a *soft* cooking apple. Do not cook it, but peel and core it whole. Cut it crossways in very thin slices. Spread each slice thinly with strawberry jam, and place one slice on top of another, until the whole apple has been built up again. Eat as best you can.

Fruit salad surprise. Take a Cantaloupe melon, and cut off the top. Scoop out the seeds. Then with your big spoon remove the fruit of the melon as much as possible, being careful not to damage the shell of the melon. Put the empty melon in the refrigerator, or on ice. Now take all the fruit you can find—strawberries, cherries, raspberries—just as they are—or if too late in the year, some bananas, pears and any tinned summer fruit—and cut these latter, if used, and the

Food

fruit of the melon itself into dice. Mix together in a bowl. Then make a syrup of four ounces of sugar to half a pint of water and pour this over the fruit. Add the juice of half a lemon, a good dessert-spoonful of sherry or cognac, and the same quantity of maraschino. Stir all well together and place in a refrigerator, or on ice. When ready to serve, but not before, take the melon and fill it with the fruit salad, and over this add a generous amount of whipped-up cream, crowned with a glacé cherry. Serve with or without vanilla ice-cream.

CHAPTER 13

American Specialities

There is no distinctive American cuisine; it is a pot-pourri of European cookery, and it is uniformly good. I was talking once to a head waiter at the Commodore Hotel in New York, and he told me that there was not an American in the whole of the kitchen staff, unless the coloured kitchen hands were in that category. He said that there was every nationality that one could think of; they cooked the special dishes relative to their own country, and if there were a second edition of Babel that surely was in the Commodore Hotel kitchen.

But there are of course various dishes applicable only to the United States, owing to the main ingredients being a purely American product.

A case in point is the dish known as 'Soft Shell-crabs'. These are small crabs fried whole in deep fat after cleaning, and dipping in egg and bread-crumbs, and are served with Sauce Tartare. It is a particularly delicious dish. It is common only to the Eastern States of America and the Eastern Provinces of Canada. The custom of crabs when renewing their shells is to creep into the crevices of rocks where they cast their old hard shells and wait until the new shells harden before they emerge. In certain districts off the coast of Maine there are no rocks and no rock-pools, so the wretched crabs bury themselves in the sand during their metamorphosis. They are dug out by fishermen before the new shell has hardened and so sent to market. That is how they come to be only in that particular part of the world.

Clams, of which the famous Clam Chowder is made, are the shell-fish usually grouped in this country as a member of the mollusc family. Treated as oysters they are very good, but if eaten with sprinkled lemon juice one misses the comfortable size of the oyster, which is one of its delights, and

Food

they are, I think, best dipped in tomato cocktail, which of course is a favourite American way of eating oysters.

It is curious how really bad American and Canadian salmon can be, judged by British standards. Of course the rivers, especially in Canada, teem with salmon, but it is all hard and terribly tasteless. I remember once in Toronto being recommended by a Canadian friend at his luncheon club to try a certain salmon which they were serving, and which he—knowing Scotch and Irish salmon—assured me was eatable, and so it was—not too bad. The Canadians know this, and trappers and others in the Canadian North West do their best to avoid eating it, dried salmon and moose being of course the only staple foods of the North American Indian.

No wonder the Californians and the Canadians can their salmon and send it over to England for a quite large consumption, and even what is labelled 'Grade 1' is nothing compared with the luscious salmon from Scottish and Irish rivers. I have often wondered what our own salmon would be like if it were canned.

On the other hand I found Canadian Lake trout—and I presume American also from any of the Great Lakes—superlatively good and one of the most delightful dishes on the American continent. It was filleted, dipped in egg and bread-crumbs—or was it pounded 'crackers'?—and fried in olive oil by an Italian chef. It was full of flavour and of fine texture and delicious in every way—it just melted in one's mouth.

Whilst the United States citizen does not boast of his prolific salmon, he does boast of his peaches—'the land of peaches' as he calls the U.S.A. Now if there is one thing which is bad in America it is an American peach. There are certainly plenty of them, and one just stews them, and nothing else. They have truly the full flavour of peach, but they are hard and ungratifying and cannot be likened to the same fruit as that which we know in England as a hot-house peach. Even the Italian peaches which are now marketed here in quantity are a magnificent fruit compared with the American. Land of

Reminiscences of an Epicure

peaches, if you like, plenty of them, but the American in England has a revelation of what a peach should be. No wonder he feeds them to his pigs—as I once told a greengrocer in New York they were best fitted for—"sugar-cured peach-fed Virginia hams" as you can see advertised in their Stores.

The comparison between American and English fruit and vegetables is interesting. In the Letters of Walter F. Page, United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James many years ago, he complains that all English vegetables had no flavour. Curiously enough I always remarked the same about the American, and the same about American fruit. I was particularly disappointed with the American strawberry which, like the peach, never seemed to possess the luxuriousness of the English. It must stand to reason that the soil and atmospheric conditions of the whole American continent do not equal the richness of Europe, otherwise would not the ancient world have commenced in the American continent and not in the middle-east of Asiatic-Europe?

While on the subject of strawberries, the American and Canadian 'Strawberry Short-cake' is a marvellously good dish. Take say two cups of flour, two teaspoonsful of sugar, four teaspoons of baking powder and half a tea spoon of salt, and mix these together, sifting twice and working in quarter of a cup of butter and adding three-quarters of a cup of milk gradually. Toss on floured board, pat and roll out and bake for about twelve minutes in a hot oven in buttered round layer cake tins. Then split and spread with butter. Take as many strawberries as you like, warm them and sweeten them and crush them slightly. Put between and on top of Shortcake, and do not mind if a quantity fall over the sides on to the dish. Then cover the whole with cream sauce, which is made by beating three-quarters of a cup of thick cream and adding a third of a cup of powdered sugar whilst beating with an egg-beater; then adding half a teaspoonful of vanilla and a few grains of salt when the cream is stiff enough.

They are very fond of cooking the strawberry in America,

Food

and one meets hot Strawberry tart quite a lot. It is not like the strawberries which one meets in juice and arrowroot in the delicious French open strawberry tarts, where the strawberries are uncooked, but it is like an ordinary English fruit-tart made in a deep pie-dish with a crust on it. A strawberry is really not a fruit that stews well, as most people know. A strawberry eaten with sugar, with or without cream, is one thing, but when you stew it, you only obtain a weak edition of something that tastes uncommonly like strawberry jam. So of course, if you fancy the mixture of strawberry jam and cream and some pastry, well there is nothing more to say.

American apple-pie, which is lineally descended from German apple-pie, is so common that wherever you turn in the U.S.A. you cannot get away from it. It is on every menu at hotel, club or restaurant, and hundreds of thousands of good one-hundred-per-cent Americans eat it every day with the hunk of cheese served with it; in every serve-yourself cafeteria plates of it lie on glass shelves and in glass pigeon-holes to be snatched and placed on trays; in every drug-store plates of it lie beside the ice-cream and soda-fountains; in every private apartment it is the stock dessert, where all else is frustration and botheration. And this is how it is made.

Make a puff paste. Line a pie-plate with half of it. Pare, core and cut into eights four or five Bramley Seedlings if big ones, more if small ones, as there must be no stinting of apples. Place a row of apples around the plate half an inch from the edge, working towards the centre until the plate is covered; then pile the remainder on. Mix well in a separate bowl 6 ozs. of sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ a teaspoon of powdered cinnamon, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a teaspoon of grated nutmeg, $\frac{1}{8}$ of a teaspoon of salt, the juice of half a lemon, some grated lemon rind, and a handful of mixed raisins and sultanas. Spread this over the apples. Then dot this over with little pieces of butter, using about a teaspoonful in all. Wet the edges of the undercrust and cover it with the other half of paste as an upper crust, and press edges together. Brush over the top with the yolk of an egg.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Bake a little under an hour in a moderate oven. Serve always cold, never hot.

A propos of the piece of cheese served with it in America, as a good Scotsman I found it economical, as I got two courses out of one when ordering it in my service-apartment—a dessert course and a cheese course—and of course we ate them separately.

Personally I have always liked "Pumpkin-pie". There are those who say it tastes precisely like floor-polish between two pieces of pastry, but then this is the hotel-made article, and not as made by a New Englander in his home in Boston, Mass. This is quite different according to an old farmhouse recipe, and is prepared as follows:

Steam sufficient pumpkin and strain to make $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of pulp. Mix with it in order the following ingredients: two-thirds of a cup of brown sugar, a good teaspoon of cinnamon, half a teaspoon of ginger, half a teaspoon of salt, two eggs, a cup and a half of milk, and half a cup of cream. Make a puff paste. Line a pie-plate with half of it. Lay the above mixture on the paste to about half an inch from the edge. Dot this over with little pieces of butter. Wet the edges of the under-crust, and cover with the other half of paste as an upper crust, and press edges together. Bake a little under an hour in a moderate oven. Serve cold.

The best pastry-covered dish I have always thought was what an American menu calls an 'Individual Chicken-pie'. This is made as follows, and it is very good. Place a chicken in a saucepan with an onion, cover it with water and cook slowly until tender. When the chicken is half cooked, add half a tablespoonful of salt and some pepper. Remove the chicken from fire when tender, strain. Take the fat off the stock, and reboil the stock until it is reduced to about two cups. Thicken with a little flour; when boiling gradually add a tablespoonful of butter and more salt to taste if needed. Peel some potatoes, carrots and turnips, and boil them separately until nearly tender. Take them off the fire, drain them,

Food

and cut neatly into shaped round balls, or if this is difficult and you do not possess the special cutter, then into cubes. Add these to the thickened stock, which has now been taken off the fire, and also add some finely chopped peppers. Next, remove the flesh of the chicken from its bones, and add this to the stock and the vegetables. Now empty the mixture into three or four very small pie dishes—one for each person—and cover each with a puff-paste crust. Bake in a moderate oven until crust is well risen and brown, and then serve each person individually with his pie.

A very favourite chicken dish which you will constantly meet in America rejoices in the name of 'Chicken à la King', and this is how it is prepared. Boil a fowl. Melt $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of butter and $1\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoons of flour and stir together until well mixed. Then whilst stirring add $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup of chicken stock, $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup of sautéed and sliced mushrooms, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pimentos cut in strips. Now add the boiled fowl carved and divided and the breast cut in strips. Again bring to the boil and add the yolk of an egg, which you have slightly beaten. The dish is then ready to serve.

One of the most succulent game and poultry dishes in America are 'squabs'. A squab is usually described or translated into English as a Bordeaux pigeon. The latter is certainly the nearest approach to the squab; squabs roasted with a slice or two of Beechnut bacon are very luscious and take a lot of beating.

The turkey, which is of course indigenous to the American continent, is more the dish of Thanksgiving Day than Christmas, although it is eaten on both days. Roast turkey, as it should be, seems to be brought to perfection cooked in the American style, that is to say, served with hot cranberry sauce—with the cranberries more or less whole, not passed through a sieve—forcemeat and candied sweet potatoes. This compares with the English way of serving turkey, with bread sauce, chestnut stuffing and Brussels sprouts. Both are very good, but I must say I have a penchant towards the sweet potatoes,

Reminiscences of an Epicure

which of course are also indigenous to America and seem particularly well suited both to turkey and squabs and in fact all game, but are not so well suited to plain beef and mutton.

Hungarian Goulash is also a very favourite dish in cosmopolitan New York, and this is how it is made. Take 1 lb. of stewing beef and cut into $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes. Place in a saucepan and add a pint of boiling water and a little garlic and boil five minutes. Cover and simmer until the meat is tender. Pare some potatoes and cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch slices and cut the slices into cubes sufficient to fill nearly one cup. Boil five minutes, drain and add to meat say a quarter of an hour before serving time. Peel a dozen or more very small onions if you can obtain them, or if you cannot then the proportionate amount of larger ones, boil and drain them and add to goulash. Add some noodles according to taste. Cream a tablespoonful and a half of butter, to which add the same quantity of flour, and work until smooth; add this slowly to the stock in the saucepan, of which there should be by now about a cupful. Stir constantly, add salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

The way in which fish is served is surprising to an Englishman and though not distasteful does in some cases require a little getting used to. The cuisine is possibly German or Scandinavian. This is the serving of hot vegetables with the fish. For instance hot beetroot is served with salmon and other fish that is boiled, and I have even had French beans with fried fillets of plaice and sole. On one occasion some mashed turnips or swedes accompanied boiled cod and were not displeasing.

Whilst these vegetables accompany the fish course, fruit plays an important part in salads to be eaten with cold meats. Salad in America and Canada is conspicuous in a country where the great heat in summer calls for a cooling salad that is not just lettuce, tomato and beetroot that are the usual English constituents. The favourite mixture is lettuce and grape-fruit, varied with lettuce and orange, or lettuce and melon. The dressing is usually a plain oil and vinegar one,

Food

sweetened. Melon of course plays a conspicuous part in American life, as it does in Spain and hot countries generally. A lot of the large plain water melon with its red flesh is consumed, and Americans have an interesting way of serving melon in place of an hors d'oeuvres rounded like marbles, and in a dish surrounded by ice.

But above all things, the American continent is the land of ice-creams, and how delicious they are. What is nicer on a hot morning than to go into a drug-store and sit on a stool at the counter and consume a coffee ice-cream? Men in their hundreds and thousands consume them, where in England there is a sort of instinctive feeling that they are a kind of feminine or children's prerogative and should not be consumed by a man in single blessedness. It is a habit, like ice-water, that grows on one, and how interesting is that early morning cup of tea brought in on a tray by a waiter duly escorted by a glass of water with tinkling ice inside it!

CHAPTER 14

Some sweet things

A few practical ideas, as the result of much personal experience in making jam will not come amiss. During the last War I was in the country and had a garden with a lot of fruit, and this gave me the incentive to practice the noble art of fruit preserving. I suppose that I must have imbued my cuisine with some of my feelings towards wine, as my family said that my plum jam always tasted to them as if it were made with wine; but the only thing to which I ever plead guilty is some brandy in Marrow and Carrot, a little drop of Sherry in Pear, and a Liqueur in Pineapple Jam—of which more anon.

This book is not a conventional cookery book, so that the following are merely intended as some suggestions in the sweet line that are outside the normal books on Jam making, and may help in the making of good things. I will start with two recipes for Jams that are out of the ordinary.

Apple Jam. This is something that ordinary people have never tried, and until they know how good it can be, they imagine a sticky mess like over-stewed apples and say "Oh, we know all about Apple Jelly; what object is there in making Apple Jam?" Listen. Buy three pounds of Bramley Seedlings—no other apples will do. They must be fresh, just picked from the tree. Pare them and cut out all the cores. Chop the apple into three-quarter inch thickish chips, to give 2 lbs. weight of apple. Take $2\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. of granulated sugar. Mix the sugar with the apple chips in layers in a deep bowl, cover and leave all night. Now boil the skins and cores, just covered with water, gently for half an hour. Strain. Next day, pour off the syrup from the apples, add the juice from the boiled skins and cores and the juice of one lemon. If the flavour is particularly liked, either two or three cloves, or a little

Food

cinnamon, can be added, but I recommend they should be left out as it is desirable not to spoil the flavour of the Bramleys, which is sufficient. Now boil the liquid quickly for ten minutes. Add the apples, and boil steadily until clear and a bright colour, removing of course any scum in the usual way. Be careful not to stir too hard, and keep the apple pieces whole. Add a pinch of salt before taking off and test in the usual way. This should be a jam of conserve consistency not solid.

Pear Jam. This is also delicious and a great change from ordinary jams and can be made in two ways, the first giving a pronounced pear flavour, provided that the proper 'China' pears are obtained and used. The second is for using with ordinary cooking pears.

1. Take sufficient China pears, which after peeling and coring will give 2 lbs. of fruit. Cut pears in small pieces, rather larger than the apple, and place in a bowl with 2 lbs. of granulated sugar in layers. Cover, and stand all night. Take skins and cores, cover with water, and boil for half-an-hour; strain. Next day pour off syrup from pears, and add it to the strained juice from the skins and cores, and boil quickly for ten minutes. Add the pear chips, a clove and the juice of half a lemon. Boil steadily until pears are a bright clear colour and the jam sets.

2. Take 2 lbs. of pears, cut in small pieces and place in bowl with 2 lbs. of sugar. Cover and keep overnight. Cover skins and cores with water in a pan and boil half an hour and strain. Next day, boil syrup from pears with the strained juice, and the juice of half a lemon, for 10 minutes: add the pears and a little preserved ginger chopped very fine, and boil steadily until a good colour. When nearly ready add a generous glass of a sweet sherry. N.B. A little port or brandy can be substituted for the Sherry, rather less in quantity.

Vegetable Marrow Jam. And this is the proper way to make Marrow Jam. It is a very wasteful jam insofar as the ultimate weight of the jam compares with the sugar used. Obtain an

Reminiscences of an Epicure

old Marrow, towards the end of the season, peel very thinly so that a slight suggestion of the outer skin remains on the marrow. Cut the flesh of the marrow into three-quarter inch cubes, say 2 lbs. in all. Place in a bowl to soak with 2 lbs. of granulated sugar. Crush some dried stem ginger and put in muslin bag and place this in the bowl at the bottom of the marrow and sugar. Leave all night. Next day, empty contents of the bowl, including the muslin bag of ginger, into a pan, add the juice and grated rind of four small or three large lemons, about six or seven pieces of preserved ginger thinly sliced, and some of the syrup from the ginger jar. Simmer until the marrow is transparent. Then add two or three tablespoons of brandy and boil a further five minutes.

Pumpkin Jam. This can be made the same way as Marrow and has really about the same taste, which actually is in both cases nothing more or less than a mock ginger preserve.

Another vegetable jam that can be made, and which some people think is delicious is Carrot Jam.

Carrot Jam. Scrape and cook some carrots which have been cut in pieces, until they are tender, using as little water as possible. Mash down to produce one pint of purée. Place this in a pan with one pound of sugar, the juice of an orange and its grated rind and a teaspoon of citric acid. Boil until jam sets, then add a few blanched and shredded almonds and a tablespoonful of brandy. Boil another 5 minutes. Keep in open-mouthed pots; to serve, turn out on a plate.

Tomato Jam. This can be made when there is a glut of green tomatoes that cannot all be used for pickling. It is only worth eating when cooked with a good deal of lemon, and so it becomes more or less a lemon jam.

Rhubarb and Ginger. This 'vegetable' jam when properly made is one of the finest jams there are, and this is how I have evolved it after a large number of attempts to produce the ideal jam, but it is always a difficult jam to make, and to keep the rhubarb whole.

Food

Primarily it should be made from not too fat or coarse sticks of red rhubarb plucked straight from the garden, as the juice that is the essential constituent commences to dry up directly after it is picked. When this cannot be done, it must be bought in dry weather periods, and it must be firm and fresh and just come from the market, and should in preference be of the kind that greengrocers call 'Cherry rhubarb'. After cleaning the stalks with a wet cloth, 'top and tail' the stalks, and cut into one inch pieces. Take say 2 lbs. and place it in a bowl with 2 lbs. of granulated sugar in layers, some five or six pieces of preserved ginger sliced finely, the juice from the ginger jar, the juice and grated rind of two lemons and some crushed stem ginger tied in muslin. Allow these to soak in the bowl for two whole days and nights, stirring the mixture at intervals in order to properly melt the sugar. After two days pour off the syrup, and boil it for seven or eight minutes. Then add the other ingredients from the bowl, including the ginger in its muslin bag, and boil quickly for about 30 minutes. It must be stirred very gently, and in fact it is better to rock the pan; towards the end there is an inclination for this jam to stick to the pan, which must be carefully avoided. The object of stirring very gently is of course to keep the rhubarb pieces as whole as possible. Skim in the usual way, but not too early when a large amount of preliminary scum comes to the surface. The amount of crushed ginger put into the muslin bag depends on whether you like the ginger flavour. If you do not, dispense with the crushed ginger altogether, and the pieces of preserved ginger will be sufficient just to give the rhubarb a slight ginger flavour.

Pineapple Jam. This is rather an unusual jam. Peel a pineapple, cut in slices one quarter of an inch thick, discarding the centre. Divide each slice into half-inch squares. Boil these in water, half a pint of water to one pound of fruit and the juice of one lemon. When tender add one pound of sugar for every pound of fruit and boil until clear and thick. Add a port glass of maraschino, and boil five minutes more.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Cherry Jam. There are two good ways of making this jam, which is a difficult jam to make.

1. With ordinary red cherries, not whitehearts or blackhearts. Prepare 8 ozs. of currant juice by simmering a pound of red currants in sufficient water just to cover them for about twelve minutes, crushing the fruit with the back of a wooden spoon. Strain this overnight through muslin. Take 1 lb. of cherries, after first stoning them, add them to the red currant juice and the kernels of a few crushed stones, and $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. sugar. Simmer ten minutes. Add a further 1 lb. of sugar, warmed in the oven, and boil rapidly thirty to thirty-five minutes until jam sets.

2. Take $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. of Morella cherries and $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of black cherries, and stone them. Place in a pan with 1 lb. of sugar and the juice of half a lemon, and boil about three quarters of an hour until the jam sets.

Medley Jam. A jam of mixed fruits is interesting and very good. It tastes of no fruit in particular, and is useful for using in tarts and turnovers.

Summer

Take 9 ozs. each of Strawberries, Raspberries, Goosberries and Red Currants, and 6 ozs. each of stoned Cherries and Blackcurrants, a total of 3 lbs. of fruit. For the above can be substituted any other available summer fruit, viz., Loganberries, Mulberries, White Currants.

Boil Cherries, Blackcurrants and Red Currants until soft. Take juice from these and boil with 1 lb. of sugar seven to eight minutes. Then add all the fruit and a further 2 lbs. of sugar and boil until the jam sets.

Autumn

Take 1 lb. each of Dessert apples, cooking pears, and yellow plums; a total of 3 lbs. of fruit. Peel and core apples and pears and halve plums, removing stones. Cut apples and pears into pieces the size of the half plums. Place the fruit in a bowl with 3 lbs. of sugar in layers and leave twenty-four

Food

hours. Take peelings, cores and stones and simmer in $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of water for half an hour, then strain through muslin. Next day, put strained juice in pan with poured off syrup from fruit and boil seven to eight minutes. Add fruit and boil until set, adding kernels of some plums at the end. The juice of a lemon should also be added.

Winter

Take $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Tinned Pineapple, cut up into small pieces; $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs of Tinned Peaches, sliced, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. of oranges, peeled, and fruit cut into round slices; also 6 ozs. of preserved ginger, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. of glacé cherries, both chopped finely. If any of the above fruits are not available tinned or dried Apricots could be substituted. Place these fruits in a pan with the juice of four lemons and $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of sugar and some of the syrup from the tins. Boil until set.

Spring

Take 1 lb. of 'Cherry' Rhubarb, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. of Cape Plums or grapes, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each of Green Gooseberries and Mirabelles (early Italian or Spanish), and $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of Cranberries. Soak in a bowl the Gooseberries, Mirabelles, Cranberries and Cape Plums or Grapes, in layers with 2 lbs. of sugar. Soak Rhubarb in one inch pieces for twenty-four hours in a separate bowl with 1 lb. of sugar. Next day boil all fruit except Rhubarb slowly for twenty minutes. Then keep warm beside fire. Pour the syrup off the Rhubarb and boil it for seven minutes; add the rhubarb and boil quickly about twenty-five minutes until ready, leaving rhubarb whole as far as possible. Now add the two pans of fruit together and boil five minutes.

Whilst gathering sloes in the country for making sloe gin (which of course should be gathered only after the first frosts) I have sometimes come across bushes in the hedgerows where the sloes are rather large and almost like small damsons. These make an excellent jam. People who have been born and bred in the country have told me that nobody ever made jam from sloes. I have done so most successfully, and from

Reminiscences of an Epicure

wild bullaces also, but the sloe jam and also sloe jelly were very good, and were like Damson jam and jelly but with something extra that is 'wild' as distinct from cultivated, just as jam and jelly made from the wild blackberry is superior to the same made from the cultivated garden blackberry.

Sloe Jam. Take 1 lb. of sloes, slash them well all over—so that the stones can get out more quickly in the cooking—and put them on to boil with 8 oz. of water. Boil until skins are soft. Then add $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of sugar and boil rapidly for fifteen minutes, taking out all stones as they rise to the surface. Add a few kernels and a pinch of salt.

Another interesting jam, very nice for tea as you will read in Clough's 'Bothie' and much patronized in Toper-na-fusich, is Cranberry Jam; and this is how to make it.

Cranberry Jam. Take 1 lb. of Cranberries, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. of sugar and the juice of two lemons and 2 ozs. of water. Put all together in a pan and cook until jam appears ready on testing, but particularly before it has set hard. With the amount of lemon in it, it makes a very good sauce for roast turkey à l'Americaine.

Better than buying fresh Cranberries, obtain a tin of Cranberries, which are very good. Pour off half the juice, add an equal quantity of apple juice, prepared as for apple jelly, measure and add 1 lb. of sugar for every pint of juice. Boil quickly about twenty-five minutes to make an excellent Cranberry jelly, which is very nice with mutton and jugged hare.

To the tinned Cranberries add some of the apple juice and some lemon juice and make your Cranberry jam with an equal weight of sugar for the weight of Cranberries as shown on outside of tin. A very delicious jam is the result.

Other out-of-the-way Jellies to be eaten with meat are:—

Rowan or Mountain Ash Jelly. Pick these only at the very end of summer or they will be too bitter. Place in a pan, just covering with water. Boil until reduced to pulp, pressing continually with the back of a wooden spoon. Strain through

Food

muslin; add half as much more of apple juice, weigh the two juices, add 1 lb. sugar to each pint of juice, and boil until jelly sets.

Elderberry, Blackberry and Apple Jelly. Place in a pan 2 lbs. of Blackberries, 1 lb. of Elderberries, and 2 lbs. of green cooking apples, the latter cut in pieces—peel and cores all included—cover with water, bring to the boil and simmer, pressing fruit with wooden spoon, for about half an hour. Strain through muslin overnight. Measure $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. sugar to each pint of juice. When juice boils add sugar previously warmed in oven and boil rapidly until it jells.

Medlar Jelly. Take a pound or two of medlars in the hard condition, not soft and rotten as one eats them. Cut them into pieces, put in pan, cover with water. Boil until pulp, strain. Next day measure juice, add 1 lb. of sugar to each pint of juice and juice of a lemon. Boil quickly until it jells.

Hawthorn Jelly. Gather the wild hawthorn berries late in the autumn when they are becoming a reddy-brown. You will need a lot of them. Pick off stalks, wash them, and place in a pan with one pint of water to every four pounds of the fruit. Cook until soft, bruising them with the back of the wooden spoon. Strain all night through muslin. The next day measure juice and add 1 lb. of sugar to each pint and the juice of two lemons. Boil rapidly until it jells.

The last two jellies are a sticky kind of jelly and closely resemble Guava Jelly both in taste and texture, and are delicious with hot roast mutton.

Mint Jelly. Take three tablespoons of finely chopped mint (3 ozs.) and five heaped tablespoons of sugar (5 ozs.), a packet of gelatine sufficient for one pint, eight ounces of white vinegar and five ounces of water. Soak gelatine in two ounces of water, heated; add sugar; pour over this boiling vinegar and water then add the chopped mint. Pour into very small glass jars, and when beginning to set stir in order to keep the mint equally spread.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

The following are the successful marmalades which can be recommended as a change from the ordinary Seville Marmalades, the recipes for which are in all the Jam Books.

Jelly shred Marmalade. Take $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Sevilles, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sweet Oranges, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. lemons; total weight of fruit $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Use 7 pints of water, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pints to boil fruit in, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints to boil shreds in. (a) Cut in shreds the thin rind of 1 large or 2 small Seville oranges. Boil in $1\frac{1}{2}$ pints of water until tender, (about half an hour), then leave to soak all night. (b) Cut oranges and lemons, peel and all, boil in $5\frac{1}{2}$ pints of water for one hour. Strain all night through muslin. Next day, add strained juice to the shreds and their juice and measure. There should be not less than about $4\frac{1}{2}$ pints of juice. To this add sugar at the rate of 1 lb. to 1 pint of juice, boil quickly for about twenty minutes until the jelly sets. Test in the usual way. Not less than eight pounds of jelly marmalade should result.

Mixed Marmalade. Take 6 Seville Oranges, 2 Sweet Oranges, 1 large grape fruit and 1 lemon. Boil Sevilles and Grape fruits whole in six pints of water, that is 6 pints of water to 3 lbs. of fruit. When the skins are tender—tested by prodding them with a match—cut them in halves, scrape out the inside, discard pips, and cut up peel fine. Take peel off Sweet Oranges and lemon, and throw it away. Divide this fruit into its natural sections, taking out pips. Add this to the pulp and peel of Sevilles and Grapefruits and the water they were boiled in, and let it stand all night. Measure and add 1 lb. of sugar to every pint of the fruit and juice. Boil steadily for about forty minutes. Add pinch of salt at the end when marmalade is just ready.

Seville and Lemon chips. Take 2 Seville Oranges and 2 lemons. Before cooking take peel off Sevilles and Lemons and cut up anyhow with scissors into small chips. Add this to the sliced fruit, having carefully removed all white pith, with $2\frac{1}{2}$ pints of water. Boil until tender and stand all night. Next day add 1 lb. of sugar to each 1 lb. of pulp and boil forty minutes. The marmalade should be in jelly form.

Food

Grape Fruit Marmalade. Boil 2 lbs. of Grape fruits whole in 4 pints of water until rind is easily pierced with a match-end. Cut in half. Scoop out pulp and remove any pips. Cut rind into large thick slices. Place rind, pulp and the water in which the fruit has been cooked in a bowl to stand all night. Next day measure, add 1 lb. of sugar to each 1 pint of the pulp and juice, of which sugar seven-eighths should be granulated and one-eighth should be dark brown moist sugar. Cook steadily about thirty to forty minutes and add pinch of salt at last.

Mince Meat. Finally, this is a private and particular recipe for making mince-meat to put in mince-pies at Christmas. It should be made not later than the end of October, so that it has time to 'mature'.

No cooking at all is needed. The following are the ingredients:

- 8 ozs. Sultanas or Raisins
- 8 „ Currants
- 8 „ Suet
- 8 „ Citron peel
- 8 „ Chopped raw cooking apple
- 8 „ Castor sugar
- 2 „ Prunes
- 2½ „ Dried walnuts
- ½ „ Mixed Spice
- 2 ozs. = 2 level tablespoons of Brandy
- 1 „ = 1 level tablespoon of Rum
- Pinch of salt.

Total 56 ozs. = 3½ lbs of mince-meat. Mix all together well, and then pass once through large mincer. Add spirit last. Bottle and press down well. Cover as for jams.

INTERCHAPTER

Two Scenes from 1905

Supper at the Savoy

In July 1905 Edwardian London was at the height of its brilliant era. It was an age of polished manners, of entertaining, of well-dressed men and beautiful women.

In the Park by Stanhope Gate, in the best of the summer evening as it languished and blended into the brilliant night, there passed and repassed an elegant crowd. They sat on the little green chairs talking to each other, groups stood here and there, and an endless stream moved in and out confined to the comparatively small part of the Park that commenced almost opposite Hamilton Gardens and passing Stanhope Gate ended at the little enclosure with a statue. Within that small space sat and loitered and chatted some few hundreds of men, all of them in morning coats in black or gray with top hats and gloves and walking sticks, and women with flowing chiffon dresses and magnificent large hats.

Ascot had passed, and the Eton and Harrow match. Soon would come Goodwood, and then away to Scotland. In the meanwhile this was the London Season, with King Edward and Queen Alexandra—the latter beautiful and driving in her carriage along Hyde Park and passing slowly the gay throng at Stanhope Gate and receiving their homage.

It is about half past six and numbers have greatly thinned out. In another half hour all the little green seats will be empty, and the people we have seen will be away, dining at home, or in some cases at a restaurant where they will be entertaining a party in a private room, a custom beginning to grow up as a change from the lavish dinner-parties in their own houses.

Every night now there will be two or three private dances given for the debutantes of the year, and the big houses in

Food

Grosvenor Square and Belgrave Square will be blazing with lights, with a little crowd hustled together at the awning'd entrance to watch the fine people go in. Perhaps it may be the night of a Court, and some of these debutantes will come along with the ostrich feathers in their hair and their scintillating white dresses, and there will be officers in strange uniforms and a brilliant assembly from various embassies in their gold and black Court dress.

In the West End, as gay as it is to-day, with its lights and sky-signs the London crowd surges past the theatres through Piccadilly Circus to Leicester Square, where the Empire with its promenades stages "The Duel in the Snow", a ballet with Adeline Genée dancing her *pas-de-seul* and with that great actor of pantomime, Paul Martinetti. Close by is Daly's Theatre—home of 'San Toy' and the 'Country Girl'—and half across the Square the Alhambra, also with its promenades and its Grand Ballet.

Passing along, the crowd looks into the Long Bar of the Criterion, and young men, two or three of them together, will go into the Café de l'Europe or the Leicester Lounge. There also men and women pass into the old Café Royale with the red plush seats, and the Gambrinus with its good Pilsener and Municher, and the Monaco and the Trocadero.

Far away in the distance the Great Wheel lit up at Earls Court goes slowly round, and down below it amongst the hundreds and thousands of little lights a merry crowd passes and listens to the Exhibition band, as the boats from the Water Chute splash into the water and all the boys and girls in the boat sing out. There also is that sweep of green that is the Welcome Club with its open-air restaurant and its smart clientele, sitting with their chairs on the grass sipping their coffee and liqueurs.

Back to the West End now in a hansom, and all around in the empty Kensington streets there is nothing but other hansoms with their gay tinkling. At Covent Garden the scene is an animated one. It is a Melba and Caruso night, and it is

Reminiscences of an Epicure

'La Bohème' perhaps, or 'Rigoletto', or 'Cavalleria' and 'Pagliacci', with Caruso singing his last great aria with the sob in his throat, and those last solemn words "La Commedia è finita"—and so the curtain falls.

We struggle through the crowds. It is a hot night, and we carry our opera-cloaks on our arms and our opera-hats weigh lightly on our heads, our gloves and our gold-mounted ebony sticks in our hands. And so we pass into the busy Strand and on to the Savoy for supper.

Of all the memories of pre-war England and of all that was elegant and best of the culture that was England, this scene in the Savoy remains the clearest. Down the flight of stairs into the large square carpeted anteroom pass all the most beautiful women with their escorts. Quietly and stately into the throng they come heeding little of the murmur of conversation between the gathering crowds. Beyond the glass partition the supper tables are all laid, and waiters with their spotless white aprons are waiting to serve. There is no blatant noise of a band, no garish and gimcrack gold pillars or mirrors, just a subdued pale blue and the palms and the small gold chairs and tables.

Here meet the peerage and the stage coming along after the theatre is over, with all the best of Edwardian London. Coming down the stairs now are Sir Charles and his future Lady Wyndham, and just behind them you will see Charles Hawtrey laughing and talking to friends on his left and right, that actor so well known in comedy parts, who wore a moustache—and there is Gertie Millar from the 'Spring Chicken' at the Gaiety with her husband Lionel Monckton, who wrote all those wonderful Gaiety tunes which we all sang and whistled.

And behind them, coming down wistfully is Gabrielle Ray—that beautiful little dancer who is as light as a feather with some uncanny diablerie in her slow dancing steps—who had recently made a sensation in the 'Orchid', the earlier show at the Gaiety. She is in white, a mere slip of a girl, and there

Food

are sparkling on her hands, her wrists and round her neck the most magnificent diamonds it is possible to imagine

And so she and the others, and all of us go gradually forward to the supper-room, where the ever urbane and smiling maître d'hotel shows us to our tables.

This is a long story, in a book all about food and wines, to lead up to what is nothing more than a simple supper, but all that there is of it is superb.

Consommé en tasse,
Mousse de Jambon truffé,
Fraises Melba.

and we choose as our drink Pol Roger 1898 and a Crème de Menthe frappé.

In those days the truffled mousse was a thing to dream of, and Pol Roger the most popular Champagne and of exceedingly wonderful quality. So supper proceeded in a merry buzz of conversation, and slowly those who had finished passed out to sit and smoke and have coffee and liqueurs. Gradually the room filled up, and everyone was gay and the conversation animated, and then at 12.30 the lights were put out—almost, for by law the restaurant closed at 12.30—but for another half-hour it was the custom to sit in the semi-darkness and finish one's talk and one's cigar.

So the memory of a great time in Edwardian England passed away, and so passed away also the faces of all those we remembered so young and beautiful in those wonderful days.

Dinner in Soho

I will dine with you to-night, *mon ami*. I will take you to a small restaurant hidden from the vulgar eyes of 'ros-bif' Englishmen. Right away to the centre of the great city my little restaurant snuggles in an unknown byway, where even you, dear Cockney, who love your labyrinth of streets, have not yet thought to wander. You may have heard distantly of it. Perhaps Le Queux or Fergus Hume has mentioned it, has

Reminiscences of an Epicure

whispered tales of gruesome horror about it: how it was here—in this little café, so bizarre, so cosmopolitan—some young, struggling Bohemian met the old Professor, whose secret, locked up in the recesses of his daughter's heart, provided an enthralling *motif* running through a most sensational romance; how it was in this corner—the very corner where your philosopher has his *café au filtre* of an evening (for of course he is a recognised habitué)—some little Rigoletto of a fellow midst clouds of smoke whispered the story of his youth, its adventure and its grotesque dénouement.

Yes, my little café—restaurant if you will—is as real as the special *chef* who makes the omelets (*omelette au rhum*, six-pence extra, and quite worth it), and all the time it is quite near you. You, diner of fifteen courses, who would despise the half-dozen of mine, need only wander up past the old theatre with the tall pillars in the Grassmarket; you, old Colonel, need only turn up by St. Zebedee's till you get to the emporium at the corner, then dive behind it by way of Dutch Street, and you are almost at the doors.

You and I, *cher ami*, are there already. We turn up by this side-door and enter. What a number of voices! what a hubbub! what a din! A babel of nations: Paris, Berlin, Vienna, in embryo! There are smirking waiters and pretty women, *grandes dames*, gourmets and gourmands; there are cigarettes, liqueurs, fans, footstools and fopperies, and many another bagatelle besides. We settle down to an empty table. Enter my waiter, who addresses us in English. Wonderful waiter this! The next second he is attending to Herr Donnerblitzer, who relishes the *hors d'oeuvre*, disputing with madame on a question of etiquette (alas! she no longer has her little *guichet* at the receipt of custom), and letting off side-issues on some burning question to a long-suffering confrère. François knows enough tongues to make a Cook's interpreter turn green with envy or to qualify for a full-blown globe-trotter's amanuensis.

He brings us the menu. Shall we have *hors d'oeuvre* or soup? *Il ne fait rien*, for they are both *par excellence*. I will

Food

take *consommé*; you will have *crème de Samedi*. I recommend the latter. It is like an old friend who turns up again; it is the sum total of the week, yet most palatable. At least that old epicure on the right relishes it most audibly. An old friend of mine—an F.R.S., D.Sc., lecturer and full-blown palæontologist to wit—used to tell an interesting story of these soups. There was an old friendly ox-tail, he said, on which he once scratched his initials, and which used to appear in his soup with unvarying persistency like the body in *Eugene Aram*. One day he could stand it no longer. Overcome by influences such as the Evolution of Matter and the Survival of the Fittest, he wrapped the historic 'ox-tail' in his kerchief, carried it home, and examined it closely. Imagine his amazement on finding that beyond doubt this bone was no more ox-tail than the soup, but an interesting surviving relic of the mammoth — (N.B. — *Elephas primigenius*, Quaternary period, as the text-books tell you). If this proposition is correct, the corollary we derive is this: If primitive man originally made his soup with it, into the waters of how many soups has it entered, allowing for a utilisation of (say) fourteen times in every lunar month?

But François wishes to take my plate, so I must cease soliloquising, and we pass on to the fish. There is *blanchailles à la diable*, or *sole frit* as palatable as any that ever graced the environment of the Palais Royale. 'Allow me'— Let me introduce you to the *vin ordinaire*, which is included. This varies with the state of the market, *pari passu* with the customers' pockets. I will explain. When money is plentiful it approaches a good *médoc*; when things are bad you could not offer it with a show of decency to a thirsty *cocher de fiacre*. But the wine is at its prime now, so let us be quick and make the most of it.

Shall we have *jambon d'York aux petits pois*, *fricassée de veau*, or *navarin*? You, my friend, will have *fricassée*, whereon I shall philosophise later. I choose *navarin*. *Navarin* is an enigma; it is most delightfully delicious. It is like an omnibus

Reminiscences of an Epicure

in a London fog. You never know where you are going or what will happen next. *Navarin* is the *chef d'oeuvre* of my café, but it savours rather of the cab-horse in the Mafeking stew. Monsieur le Propriétaire comes up to us and shakes us warmly by the hand. 'Are you vell?' he says. He has said these three words to his English customers these forty years—a dapper little Frenchman, all round and fat and smiling; and madame is like him. His hair is as short as his English vocabulary, but he has a merry twinkle in his eye for all the world.

You, *mon ami*, on my instructions, are enjoying a delicious *fricassée*, à propos of which 'I can a tale unfold' (with all the following lines appropriate to the occasion), enough to make any wretched and blind, stumbling gourmand turn white with horror. But I will take this as a *canard* in my *café* at the end. Meanwhile arrives the endless *poulet rôti*. Whenever I see this—and I have seen it a thousand times—on the menu, I remain silent in wonder. In hundreds upon hundreds of hotels abroad, this, with salad, is a *sine quâ non* of a respectable *déjeuner* and *table-d'hôte*. Where do the chickens come from? The question was once set to a celebrated wrangler, who to this day is still racking his brain to solve it. Take Switzerland. Say there are five thousand hotels—am I right, statistician?—there may be more or may be less. Say, then, at each of these five thousand hotels, twice a day (as is *comme il faut*) they provide *poulet rôti*, and on an average all the year round there are twenty people in each hotel (allowing for the overcrowding in the summer and the general emptiness in the winter), then we arrive at the following: there would be one hundred thousand people every day in the hotels, for which two hundred thousand meals have to be provided; and suppose one chicken feeds eight people, the vast total of twenty-five thousand full-grown chickens are slaughtered each day for consumption, or nine million one hundred and twenty-five thousand chickens a year; and this, mark you, in Switzerland alone! Where do they all come from? Comprehension shudders at the thought of the number devoured all over the

Food

world. Add to this the number of eggs eaten, and the birth-rate of chickens must stagger humanity!

Let us quick to our *café*, not *mazagran*, but *au filtre*, for the liqueur is necessary as a stimulus to such statistics. We will pass over the sweets, the ices, the cheese (always good and worthy of the old jokes), and the dessert. 'Gentlemen, you can smoke'. François brings us *café* (which is included) and yellow chartreuse (which is not).

Now, *cher ami*, listen to my words of wisdom. Smoke your cigarette; I will take the pipe of the old stager, in the wreaths of smoke from which I see the inspiration of my philosophy. 'Tell me about my *fricassée*', you say; 'it was excellent, so delicately flavoured'. I remain silent, and slowly puff out a long curl of smoke.

'Well, there is a famous hotel', I begin, 'the name of which is immaterial to my story. The information was given me by a good lady whose cook's sister was under-scuttery-maid at—well, at this famous hotel. *Eh, bien*, for many years it had been noted for its *fricassée*. The taste was *superbe, magnifique*; *c'est à dire*, there was just the faintest idea of some delicate something, but what that something was you never could tell. It was just enough to make the whole dish divine, without tasting too strongly of some particular essence. How was it done? was the question. What was the recipe? The cook's sister disclosed the great secret to the world. When the dish was cooling in the pot, the 'boots', having duly munched a raw onion, *breathed* over the heterogeneous concoction for the space of five minutes!

Reader, we have finished our smoke and our coffee; I have finished my philosophising, and you your disgust.

'*Garçon! garçon!*'

Garçon has been on the *qui vive* for the last five minutes. We pay—what, for a dinner of six courses *à la Parisienne*, with wine and *café* thrown in? Two shillings each only, which

Reminiscences of an Epicure

would give us but two chops and a piece of cheese in the City!

And so, with a friendly tip, a friendly nod, and a friendly feeling, we get up and make our way out, through the midst of Paris, of Berlin, of Vienna; amongst the hard-worked waiters and the smiling proprietor; past the family here, the students there, that old man and his wife (gourmets both of them, who can tell you the *chef d'oeuvre* of every small hotel in Europe); past that quiet Englishman who sits by himself, cynically regarding this little side-show of Vanity Fair. We go through them all—pretty ladies, happy men, pince-nez and cigarettes—till now, in the street again, in the byways of old London, *cher ami*, I will bid you *au revoir*, that you may return home to your 'bif-tek' and to the contemplation of these, my trifling philosophies.

INTERCHAPTER

A Scene from 1955

At an elegant private party

It is not 1905—just add half a century; it is 1955.

Edwin and Angelina have become Stephen and Penelope, and they are throwing a party—the first after coming back from their honeymoon—in their newly furnished mews-cottage in Chelsea. They are providing the food, but they cannot run to the drinks, and so they have sent out a neat little card printed with 'Stephen and Penelope at Home', and saying: "Will each guest please bring a bottle of something—beer or English wine not allowed" So, as one can imagine, the party is very select and up-to-date.

An old Epicure holds an invitation, and—leaving behind him memories of vintage port and ancient soleras of Oloroso—he comes along with a couple of bottles of South African sherry, nice gaudy labels and all, and hands them to his hosts.

They have removed all the furniture from the lounge, except the sideboard and the dining-table and a settee, and in the corner the wireless and portable gramophone, and they have taken up the rugs, and so it does not matter if a few ignited cigarettes or a sausage or two get on the floor or a drink or two is upset. On the table a large cloth is spread, and on it are plates and dishes and forks, and smaller plates of various shapes and sizes. And there are luncheon-meat and tomato sandwiches, and sandwiches of sardines and cheese; and little cocktail onions and sweet gherkins and baby Frankfurt sausages on sticks; and potato salad and Russian salad and Heinz vegetable salad out of a tin, and salads containing roll-mops and button mushrooms; and tomatoes and cucumber; and whole plates brimming over with salami, 'hot dogs' and meat pasties.

It is seven o'clock, and Stephen and Penelope have got

Reminiscences of an Epicure

everything okay and are waiting for their guests to arrive. She has got on a wonderful creation with a crinoline effect and an evening bodice without shoulder straps; she has had a new perm. to-day, and her lips and nails are a bright carmine red. Stephen is wearing a pair of black corduroys, a sports-coat, a canary pull-over and suede shoes—so between them they will suit their guests whether they come in evening dress or just as they are from the office.

Quickly now they come in, in their ones and twos and threes, and soon there are bottles of all sizes and description—port, sherry, ready-made cocktails, gin—plenty of gin—and whisky—beside the lime-juice, lemon-squash and tonic water, and the glasses on the sideboard.

"Gosh, you do look smashing, Kay!" exclaimed Penelope to a bright young thing coming across the room with her lighted cigarette in a long holder and a bottle gold and glittering peeping out of a cardboard cover. "Here's something to drink both your healths in, you darlings!" she said, and she presented her hostess with a bottle of Champagne which she had got from the Corner House for twenty shillings and sixpence on her way to the party.

"Champagne is not permitted!" said Stephen, but he opened the bottle and filled up as many cocktail glasses as it held. And with the sound of the cork popping, there was a murmur of "Oh!", and healths were drunk all round to the newly married pair, and there was a great babble of conversation and laughter and sound of plates and more corks. Soon the air became thick with the cigarette smoke and with the heat of the room and the mixed scents of powder and hair-do's.

A group of young men together at one end of the room were arguing and laughing and smoking—one was in evening dress with a soft collar and shirt, another wore a well-cut lounge suit, the others had light flannel trousers or corduroys and sports-coats. Two of them had beards. Beside them stood two girls, trying to draw their attention; one was a blonde, and she had on a tartan skirt and a tight-fitting red jumper, and

Food

earrings; the other had green corduroy slacks. They were very 'arty', but they were not prepared to come here and talk Gauguin and Goya with these young men, so they fetched a plate of hot-dogs and a bottle of something and barged in with their refreshment.

"You'll get dry going on talking like that!" exclaimed one of them who called herself Gloria. "Here's something to do you good anyway", and she poured into all the glasses, which showed port or sherry at the bottom of them, from a bottle marked 'Gin'.

"Oh, steady, darling, stop pouring!" exclaimed one of the boys. "Get me some lime-juice, Sandra", he said, turning to a brunette. The girls tossed down their gin and went over and joined another group at the other end of the room. Presently the one with the bottle found a boy called Michael.

"Oh, Mike, isn't it glorious not to know what one's going to drink next? I've had a sherry, a port, some beer and now I'm in charge of the gin bottle. Have some?" "You're lovely, Gloria", said Michael, "especially behind a bottle of Old Plymouth—say when, and I'll sail with you anywhere!" "Three sheets, Mike darling, that's your kind of sailing, I'm thinking". Gloria threw herself down on the settee beside Michael and put her arm round his neck. "Petting not allowed!" said Penelope speaking from the middle of the room.

The hostess stood in the centre of an admiring group, glass in hand sipping her drink through a straw. An animated throng of men had collected round her. One was a much older man, big moustachioed and whiskered, wearing spats and a monocle, and fancying himself a page out of Trollope. Another was a young man who had come straight from the City and thought the newly-married pair would like a tip and give him a little order to buy shares, but the moustachioed gentleman got in before him and had something better in the shape of a horse.

"Oh, that reminds me", said Penelope, "will someone bring

Reminiscences of an Epicure

me a sausage". A very young man came up to her with a plate—two sausages only on it. "Stephen, where did you get these funny-looking chipolatas?"

Stephen was busy trying to open a difficult tin of sardines. Conversation had begun to flag, the food supply was getting low, the room was suffocating with smoke.

"Stop opening that old tin, Stephen!" called Penelope, "and open the window—we can't see each other. And then shove on the wireless and see if the dance-music is on".

The wireless gave out a raucous scream, and Penelope rushed up and snapped it off. Stephen put on a record.

In a minute the groups scattered, the room started to move, and soon a dozen couples were gliding over the floor. Cigarettes were stuck on ash-trays or dropped on the boards and stood on. Everyone was very hot. "Drinks low too!" said Penelope to Stephen. "Where's Gloria with her gin bottle?"

And then suddenly, new parties came in.

"Hurrah, more booze!" The salads and the sardines and the sausages might be low, but there was plenty to drink now with new arrivals constantly coming in after dinner. They all brought different drinks—one had a bottle of Burgundy, two others brought Rum. What did it matter? You just filled up your glass with whatever came first, and what you put in soon absorbed the dregs of the last. The dancing went on.

"Now, when I was a young man", said the epicure, turning to the moustachioed gentleman as they stood by the door, "the young girls seemed so bright and jolly, tight little wenches, with a little powder on their noses, and gosh! didn't they just throw themselves into the polkas and the schottisches and the Lancers, but now you'd think they were all mutes at a funeral—they go slowly and mechanically round like a lot of stuffed dolls! And the nails and the shadowed eyelids! And they didn't drink like this in my young days—just a glass, or a glass and a half, of the 'Boy', and that was more than enough for them".

Round and round without any animation went the dancers.

Food

It was past midnight, the dancing was languishing. And then gradually the talking and the laughing became more general, and soon couples began leaving one by one.

"Cheers!" said Sandra as they had a last one.

"Happy days!" said Stephen.

"Thanks for a lovely night, Penelope!"

"Thank you, Stephen!" shouted another.

And then, sotto voce: "For God's sake, Mike, take me home, I'm tight!" said Gloria.

SMOKES

“And a woman is only a woman,
But a good cigar is a Smoke”.

Kipling.

CHAPTER 15

Vuelta de Abajo

Having eaten our dinner, consisting of all the good eats of which I have written, and drunk our wines, the ladies have withdrawn and we have been left alone in the dining-room to enjoy our coffee and liqueurs. We can therefore, in the absence of the female element, discourse upon cigars.

There was a time once when there existed one cigar which could be universally obtained wherever you happened to be. In the heights of the Highlands or the depths of the English country, in the smallest of inns or the meanest of tobacconists you could always get—a Corona Corona. Often you would find in a small country inn, or in the one tobacconist of a small seaside village, boxes containing the relics of some strange and unfamiliar Flor de Cabbageos, the sight of which alone would cure you of the habit of over-smoking where all advertised nostrums had failed, but there would be one box almost full kept for the benefit of that stray motorist, and it contained Corona Coronas, price two shillings each. Many a time has such a box been dug out for my benefit in some wayside hostelry, and I have marvelled at the publicity which could have ensured the presence of this Prince of all Cigars.

One must talk largely of Havanas in the past tense, for though the real article has come back at last to some extent, it is prohibitive in price.

The Corona size of the Corona brand of Havana cigars was always a good smoke despite the amount spent on advertising, but they went off in quality—the difference between the Cuban made cigar and its cousin of the same leaf matured and rolled elsewhere—when the factory was moved before the War to Trenton in New Jersey.

Cigars, even more than wines, are a matter of individual taste, and a good cigar is a good cigar only when it appeals to

Reminiscences of an Epicure

the individual smoker. I remember the time when, for instance, I did not like the flavour of a J. S. Murias, when I found a Henry Clay rather too light a smoke, and when a Partaga or a Larranaga or a Romeo y Julieta were indeed like the breath of incense from Heaven. Amongst all the great gifts which the Island of Cuba has bestowed on man, there has been nothing perhaps to excel the supreme excellence of these three. One could always rely on them, and they have always retained their high quality.

A Partaga Cabinet Corona was actually about as fine a cigar as could be found anywhere. It had the most superb satin touch and finish, and the aroma from a full bundle in a box was delicious. In my early days I seem to remember it as a little on the strong side as compared with Larranaga or Romeo, both of which latter always remained my favourite cigars and were a beautifully clean, delightfully cool smooth smoke.

I suppose that one's palate begins very slowly to deteriorate from the commencement of smoking cigars. This is rather a sweeping statement, and is a matter of opinion; it must depend on how much one uses or abuses the privilege of fine tobacco. Maurice Healy says of drinking: "Don't begin drinking at all until you are seventeen or eighteen Drink only wine, beer and cider until your are thirty, and keep the reinforcement of spirits for a time when your system may be glad of such assistance".

It must be the same with smoking. I know that I gained enormously by never smoking at all until I was twenty. I never smoked a pipe and my cigarettes were few, until the wonderful Havana world opened out before me a few years later. I can individually recall the cigars I smoked first in those early years, with a wonderful remembrance of their first impact on an unspoilt palate. It was just the same as that first taste of a rich Sauternes. I have always been thankful for a practice to which I have adhered all my life, and that is, never to smoke until after lunch, and then again not to smoke until

Smokes

after dinner. And later I made a practice of smoking light British-made cigars as a general rule, leaving Havanas for after-dinner smoking. After all it is a mistake to drink always Chateau clarets until they pall, and anyone who drinks or smokes of the best all the time loses the enjoyment of the better wines or smokes for the better occasion.

Anything approaching chain-smoking in cigars is of course positively evil, and should be avoided at all costs, quite apart from the fact that excess breeds high blood pressure and hardened arteries. The habit can be easily indulged in, if not carefully guarded against. I would advise anyone who smokes cigars in preference to a pipe or cigarettes, to bind themselves to no more than one cigar after lunch, and two after dinner; and on no account should one inhale cigar-smoke.

Cigars, like Champagnes, were a great deal like each other in following a fashion—or was it following quality? I remember the time when Henry Clays and Murias and Villar y Villars were very popular, and then they seemed to drop out as newer cigars such as Hoyo de Monterey and San Christobal took their places in popular esteem. The latter brand included a very choice and cheap Cabinet cigar 'Alfred de Rothschild' at 130s. a hundred; the former's 'Diademas' Cabinet at 200s. was one of the most enjoyable smokes I knew. Upmanns, too, in their round air-proof glass jars were useful when you went for a holiday by the sea, and they have always been a popular smoke. They were an anchor to which I clung on my return from America, when I wanted a 'green' cigar, which the Upmann brand has always included.

In certain particulars cigars are analogous to wines, insofar as the smaller cigar made from the same leaf is not, and never can be, as good as the same tobacco blended and rolled into the big cigar. And as there is the same difference between a half-bottle and a full bottle of the same Chateau claret, so the difference between a bottle and a magnum is reproduced. Some of the biggest of the pre-war Havanas such as Cabanas y Cabajal 'Impresarios', six inches in length, and costing 250s.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

and Hoyo de Monterey 'Mendiales' of the same length and exceeding stoutness costing 260s., were a marvellous long smoke and seemed to possess the quintessence of aroma and flavour. They were particularly suited to a public dinner with long boring speeches afterwards. I used myself to like a slightly thinner cigar but half an inch longer—a Montecristo—which was sold by that wonderful firm, John Mark of Manchester. They used also to have a very good Hoyo de Monterey at 120s. which, though only $4\frac{1}{8}$ inch long, made up for it by exceeding tubbiness and contained very good tobacco.

It is difficult to name intelligently a particular variety of the well-known brands, as so many names are the exclusive right of a particular firm of direct importers. My purchases before going to America in 1922 were mostly in the City, and after I returned in 1924 I got most satisfactory cigars from the Manchester firm mentioned and from the Army & Navy Stores.

I see in the notes which I attached to my wine-lists during the period 1924 to 1939 that I had from John Mark, in addition to their own exclusive selections:

Romeo y Julieta: Regal Coronas at 200s.

Coronas de Cabinet at 190s., both 'straight' shaped.

Partaga: Gobernadores Grandes, an exceedingly fine and sumptuously large conical, or torpedo, shape, at 275s.

Ramon Allones: Algo Bueno, a small 4 inch 'straight' shape at 110s.

The Army & Navy Stores used to sell a very fine cigar, exclusive to them I believe, called Don Pepin, and I used to smoke a Petit Corona of this brand, and the delightful San Christobal 'Alfred de Rothschild' referred to earlier was one of their selections. They were sold, if I remember right, layer'd in deep boxes with a sliding lid, and during the time they lasted were about as satisfying a cigar for the money as could be found anywhere.

With the exception of the big Cabanas y Cabajal I have referred to, I never seemed to come across one that I particularly cared for, though they were my father's favourite cigar

Smokes

and were the first I ever smoked—surreptitiously—with dire results. A Ramon Allones Cabinet, Petit Corona, was for long a favourite of mine, and a wonderful Triangulares-shaped cheroot tied up in bundles of three of a brand called Excepcionales, and which seemed to be a speciality of that old and reputed firm in the City, John Wood & Co., was one of the loveliest smokes I ever possessed in any quantity. The memory of these especially seems that of something in another world.

Except on a special occasion or after a dinner-party, when the combination of wines and delicious cooking, enhance the beauty of a fine Cabinet Corona, I found that for general use the Petit Corona size was a more 'comfortable' smoke, and for very many years I stocked a Romeo y Julieta Petit Coronation de Luxe at 130s. and a Partaga Cabinet 'Petit Fantaisias' at 120s.

I have always considered that the shape of a cigar is an important item. For instance I find that quality goes with the usual 'straight' or Corona shape, while the 'pointed' or torpedo shape are more 'comfortable' for smoking. I think that as one grows older, one finds the big-mouthed shape, the Corona type, rather tiring, and that a cigar of the torpedo shape, or a cheroot that is thinner at the mouth-end, is more convenient when smoking for any length of time.

When I got to America in 1922, the impact of the 'green' cigar as compared with the dry matured cigar in England was as great a shock as the encounter with the two-year old bootleg whisky. It seemed to me that the American cigar absolutely and entirely lacked the beautiful aroma to which I was accustomed, and I went in despair to Benson & Hedges, the London Cigar Merchants who had a New York branch on Fifth Avenue and implored them to give me a proper cigar. They said to me that the climate of New York militated against the keeping of cigars in the condition known in England. After all, apart from the general climatic conditions, New York, they explained, was a sea-port, and they strongly advised me to invest in a humidor. I did so.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

And then, after a long time, I seemed to get used to the American cigar. In my office I was supplied with some charming light and quite cheap Florida cigars for business friends, and quite candidly I smoked them very largely myself and enjoyed them as much as any other. It seemed to me that all 'green' cigars—conditioned in the American atmosphere—came down to what I might call an almost uniform level. When I left New York in 1924 a business friend presented me with a fine box of 200 Romeo y Julieta Coronas, and I packed them in my luggage and said to them, "I don't know when I shall smoke you, my friends, for I am going back to England now, and I am at last going to get a cigar worth smoking". But they just laughed at me. So, the first thing I did on my arrival was to take myself off to my old friends, John Wood, and get a box of my old favourites. Horror of Horrors! I did not like them; they were dried up, hot-smoking, insipid. I called them every kind of name I could think of and fell back with joy on my two hundred Romeos which I had shut away in a drawer.

This acquired taste for the 'green' cigar was exactly paral-
lelled by the taste for the fiery two-year- old whisky, to which I have referred, and I suppose is a sort of 'backwoods' or debauched condition of one's palate produced by local conditions and acclimatization. For many years since then, whilst I got my old liking back again for the matured Havana, I always kept for general use a British Half-a-Corona cigar which I had specially made and sold to me in a 'green' condition.

A very useful article, whilst living in New York, was that humidor which Butler & Hedges got me to buy, but not for the reason for which they sold it to me. I learned afterwards to damp the material in the lid and to keep my American cigars in good condition and then when I was packing up to leave New York, I said "I shan't need *you* any more, anyhow", and I gave it away. How much I regretted this act of generosity I was to learn in due course, as we took up yachting on

Smokes

our return to England in 1924 and also bought a bungalow on the coast, and if I ever needed an air-tight humidior I needed it then to keep my best cigars in condition from the sea-breezes.

Of course the 'green-ness' of an American cigar is very necessary for those Yankees who delight in chewing their cigars instead of smoking them—and thereby hangs a tale.

When I arrived first in New York and went to my very nice offices on the thirty-sixth floor of the Woolworth Building, with its lovely view of the Harbour and the Statue of Liberty, with its mahogany furniture and its fitted-in rich pile carpet, there stood—or perhaps I should more correctly say, there lay—on the floor an enormous round highly-polished copper 'cuspidor'. I was always stumbling over the thing, and besides I did not like the look of it, and I did not use the article, so I commanded my office boy to take it away. He gave me a funny look, being wiser than myself no doubt—but the offending article went.

My first visitor was one of those chewing-gentlemen—a mining boss from Nevada. After a few minutes he started looking for that cuspidor. I felt guilty as I saw his eyes searching and sweeping the floor. Finally he got up and went to the window, and used Broadway below my window as a substitute.

What a sight is a crowded subway train in New York—all jaws rhythmically working, all the women chewing gum and the men chewing a wad of tobacco or their cigars! Believe this story or not—my wife and I had this mining boss to dinner with us in our apartment—he became later a very big and wealthy speculator and director of countless mining companies—and he told me afterwards that the cigar he smoked that night was the first cigar he had ever smoked in his life—his first 'dry' smoke. It must have been an ordeal for him, and I appreciated the compliment he paid us.

I liked the locally made cheap cigars in the United States and Canada better than the ordinary English-made cigars;

Reminiscences of an Epicure

they seemed to be of better quality, or perhaps it was because the leaf they were made of was nearer to the country of origin. Anyhow, like wine, it had not to endure the long journey overseas and suffer the sea-sickness resulting from it, and I know it took me six months to recondition some good Havanas I brought back on a later visit to Canada, even though I wrapped them in thick paper and buried them at the bottom of my trunk.

Little did we know, after the lights went out in Europe, that it would be some thirteen years before we should buy and light up an Havana cigar again. Connoisseurs to-day have got so accustomed to the very best Jamaican tobacco, produced under more or less similar climatic conditions, the plants grown under the supervision of the well known Havana houses, the leaf matured, blended and rolled by Cuban experts, that it is doubtful whether smokers of the present generation will go back to Havanas—even if they are put on the market at the same price as the best products of Jamaica.

CHAPTER 16

Other Fields and other Crops

A bare one hundred miles separates the Islands of Cuba and Jamaica.

In the year 1939 when the importation of Havana cigars was prohibited, Jamaica woke up one fine day to find that her small tobacco industry, for many years in the hands of Messrs. Machado and the owners of the 'Golofina' brand, was becoming front-page news. And why should it not? The climate and the conditions in the two islands are similar, and with a little care and expert growing, why should not a second Vuelta de Abajo arise on British soil?

So the Jamaicans got busy, and the Cuban cigar-makers also began to do a little hard thinking about the British market, and they commenced building factories and buying land, and a steady influx of skilled Cuban workmen poured into the Island. No connoisseur of cigar tobacco can have failed to notice the great improvement in the Jamaican cigar over the past few years, and it takes him all his time, with a very experienced and sensitive palate, to detect a difference between the best of Jamaica and the best of Havana. The great firm of Laranaga was amongst others to the fore in making high quality Jamaican cigars, and the old firm of Macanudo continued under the supervision of the proprietors of the Havana Punch Factory. Amongst others that entered the market, some of the most satisfactory cigars are sold under the names of Flor de Lancha, La Invicta, Manuel Gomez and El Caribe.

What the future of the Jamaican cigar will be with Havanas back on the English market is a little difficult to say. Presumably some sort of Imperial Preference will have to be given to the trade, but whether the present high-grade produce will or can be maintained is a different matter. Until the

Reminiscences of an Epicure

position adjusts itself not much advantage can be obtained by discoursing on the different brands sold in a market which only arose through Hobson's choice of an alternative to Havana.

The English-made cigar industry might have been more firmly established, were it not for the almost absurd prices to which these cigars have gone. During the 1914—1918 War, being myself not a pipe-smoker I bought and carried about with me the big round boxes of long 'Panatellas'—a very pleasant light smoke indeed, I always used to find. They were then on sale at 16s. a hundred, and we bought them through the Mess at 12s. The price to-day is 87s. a hundred, and more for the larger sizes.

Some of the factories that made a very good English cigar or cheroot called 'Stogies' were bombed during the last War and have not produced again. A cheroot called 'Hop-Poles' used to be popular, cheap tobacco, but quite good enough for smoking at all odd times in the open air. A very good brand, on the other hand, and said to be all Havana leaf, and very reasonable in price before the War, was Don Garcia—a considerable favourite of mine—but it has now joined the ranks of the high-pricers—which makes all the difference. Anyone who could wrap a piece of tobacco leaf made—and still makes—British cigars, some of which were really quite good and others have greatly deteriorated in quality since they cannot be assured of a supply of that Dutch and Borneo tobacco on which they depended for their blend and their reputation.

Of all the English cigars or cheroots that I know of, one of the really perfect to-day, as it was yesterday, is Cope's Courts; I believe they have been discontinued only within the last few months, made first in Liverpool very many years ago and still maintaining a very high tradition and a very pleasant 'small' smoke. It was my invariable port in a storm.

Martins in old days used to be very much to the fore with their blends of tobacco from the East Indies, and the inviting

Smokes

sample boxes of Borneo cigars, of all different shapes and sizes and qualities, used to give one much pleasure in sampling. Several of their brands I used to stock quite regularly and were good value. I say 'were' because I suppose under the high duties they have risen enormously from the prices I used to know, and the price demarcation between English and Jamaican is not so marked to-day as it was in the old days between English and Havana. Under these circumstances, when I do want something that is not Indian or Burmah I buy Jamaica at a little increased cost in preference to the high-priced English cigar.

We then come to Burmah cheroots, which for those that like them have a flavour and aroma of their own. Unfortunately these cheroots which proved a Godsend to many during the last War, have become scarce—quite apart from enhanced prices—since Britain under a Socialist Government left the Burmese to carry on their own self-made mess.

At one end of the scale Scott's 'Pathan', Extra Large, at the pre-war price of sixpence-halfpenny each, were fine smoking for those who did not mind something strong. I timed them very carefully and found that with not smoking 'hot' one of these cheroots would last an hour and three-quarters. I used to like them for out-of-door smoking when yachting, after dinner, and they were most extraordinarily appreciated by 'deck-hands'. They were my great stand-by during night bombing in London, and chain-smoking of three whiled away a very unpleasant five hours of the night when Jerry was doing his best to frighten us. In fact I recall that it was one of these I was smoking when in 1943 the walls and ceilings of my house fell very uncomfortably about me. Similar cheroots—other makes as well as Scott's—are on sale to-day price two shillings or more each. Some I met a little time ago had a curious, sweetish taste, which I associated with a brand of cigarettes of the past, and once not so very long ago, since the War, I had a sample—again not Scott's—that seemed to have fireworks inside them.

Reminiscences of an Epicure

Two other brands of Burmahs which are well known are PWE and Nautch Girl. Not being much of a cigarette smoker now, I used the thin long ones for all occasions when one would light a cigarette. They are—or were—sold in bundles of ten and in 1939 cost 2s. 8d. a bundle or thereabouts. They soared up to 7s. 6d. a bundle in 1949, since when they have soared up still further and have never been seen again. Perhaps they will come down some day.

Indian cigars and cheroots are a good substitute for Burmahs, for those Indian Colonels and such like who smoke strong stuff. There are many people who before the War made a practice of smoking Trichinopoly and liked it. It is a habit that grows on one, and I have found myself after smoking a Havana or Jamaica glad to come back to the strong and pungent flavour of a 'Tritch'. You will remember that Sherlock Holmes said that he wrote a monograph on the ash of various forms of tobacco, and that he could always detect by his ash left behind the smoker of a Trichinopoly. It is a fact that the ash is of a darker colour than the ash of an English or Havana cigar.

Once upon a time the Trichinopoly with a straw through their innards used to be a satisfactory sort of smoke, and I have had countless boxes, but current makes seem bad 'drawers' and are expensive to smoke and keep alight with a ha'penny box of matches costing t'uppence. I like the brand labelled 'Nautch Girl'—Nobles No. 2—a short stumpy cheroot, without a straw, very good smoking, but very strong. I found them dangerous to keep on smoking as they caused a temporary damage to one's palate, as some strong shag tobacco tends to do, and as I do not want to lose my palate for a good bottle of Chateau Claret, I thought it wise to give them up.

Not all Indian cigars are strong; in fact, some of them can be very mild, and very pleasant medium cheroots have been sold under the name of 'Planters' and 'Zemindars'. Latterly an Indian cheroot of quite good tobacco at a very reasonable price has been put on the market under the name of 'Skymas-

S m o k e s

ter', each cheroot wrapped in cellophane, the best of them having for some reason or other gone Spanish, and calling itself "Cortado Deliciosos".

Let us now join the ladies. We can then discourse about cigarettes, which will interest them.

The glory of fine Turkish! As the scene closed down in 1914, the era of the fine cigarette came to an end. Several of the well-known tobacco firms, such as Abdullahs, had always sold a Virginian cigarette for those men who had acquired the plebeian taste for the coarser flavour, or rather, lack of flavour that went with American tobacco. You could count on your hand the number of men you knew who smoked Virginian cigarettes in preference to Turkish and imported Egyptian. And as for women—well, you could not offer a lady a working man's cigarette—Gold Flake, Navy Cut, Straight Cut, at t'uppence a packet for ten.

What made this extraordinary change in taste? Was it just the fact that Turkey was an enemy power in the War that stopped the importation of fine Turkish tobacco and forced the English world to Hobson's choice and smoke Virginian? And why continue it? Because, perfectly candidly, there is no comparison in the flavour and breed of the two tobaccos.

In these far away days the box of Savory cigarettes, or Fribourg and Tryers', which you bought in Bond Street and the Haymarket, or if you were an undergraduate at Oxford, at their branch in the 'High', contained something exquisite and refined; the cigarette case was filled and passed round, and the room was soon filled with the aroma. The Savory cigarette of those days was something to remember, full of flavour, fragrant, delightful, unlike anything to-day when Turkish tobacco comes from Rhodesia and is no more pure Turkish than the wine from the pinot or gamay in Cape Colony is pure Burgundy. One can recall some of the Turkish cigarettes one smoked, from F. L. Smith's in the Albany, those

Reminiscences of an Epicure

beautiful large round—not flat—Turkish in rice paper from John Wood in the City, the *De Reszke*, the black and gold lettered Abdullah.

And then, better still than the Turkish were the Egyptian Imported cigarettes, which of course are cigarettes of Turkish tobacco, made in Egypt and so imported into England. These were the *crème* of cigarettes, and somewhere lurking on shelves in tobacconists to-day, are a few survivors from the past which have managed to find their way here—Vafiadi for example is one of the few—to secure an occasional customer from some old die-hard of the ancient régime. What memories do these names call up—Gourdoulis, Dimitrino, Melachrino, Salonica, Nestor? In their heyday, old Nestor Gianaculous was to be seen in St. Mary Axe, a tall handsome bearded old man, well-known in the Greek Colony: and there was Salonica, the straw-tipped cigarette for cool smoking, which belonged to friends of mine, Allatini Bros., members of an Italian Jewish family in the Levant. So popular were the last named cigarette that it paid them to run their own shop in Piccadilly opposite Fortnum and Mason, selling there only their own imported Egyptian cigarettes. An exquisitely flavoured cigarette of theirs was an 'Elmas'—and so in turn we remember to-day the slightly different flavour of the Nestor, and the Gourdoulis—rich, full, succulent, a nice fat cigarette—and the Melachrino.

And then, with the War, this world vanished, and there arose those who knew not Joseph. The new arbiters of taste and fashion—and none more so than women—bought Players and Wills, State Express, Craven A, and the rest, and gloried in them. The age of the Common Man! Tuppence a packet of ten in 1914; five pence ha'penny a packet of ten in 1939; 1s. 9d. a packet of ten now! In those days of refinement and taste we thought when we paid six shillings a hundred for Egyptian cigarettes we were paying enough, and I remember my extravagance in paying ten shillings a hundred for John Wood's 'Eton' cigarettes and the ones I liked from Savory's.

Smokes

What is the attraction of the Virginian cigarette? It is true that there is some good tobacco in some of the more expensive makes, just as there was in those Virginian bought by the few prior to 1914, but there is so much of a sameness about all of them, and they are vapid, soul-less, monotonously dull—only fit for those who chain-smoke and must fly to a cigarette as to a drug on first opening their eyes in the morning. There must be some attraction, and as beer was drunk in place of wine for cheapness sake, so no doubt Virginian continued to be smoked in place of Turkish and Egyptian for cheapness, and then—it became a custom, and like all customs they die hard. Some day, no doubt, a new generation will learn to appreciate the merits of fine Turkish tobacco.

A cigarette that was a great favourite of mine, in fact the only cigarette which I consider a cigar-smoker can enjoy, was a Russian cigarette—without a tube—called "Cerise Czarevitch". They were always expensive, and they were made by the firm of Boguslavsky and sold by Careras. I do not think there has ever been a cigarette made to equal them, but they have gone from the English market for ten years or more, for what reason the tobacconists cannot tell me—as the tobacco from which they are made is grown in Macedonia and not in Russia. The same firm of Boguslavsky also made a Turkish cigarette, the 'Turf', which was well-known and popular amongst the University men, and was first-class.

Before leaving this discourse on cigarettes, mention must be made of the curious cigarette known as Ambar. They were supposed to be scented—some were—but the peculiar flavour was actually connected with some Eastern process for curing the leaf. Rumour had it that the flavour was burnt opium and that they were aphrodisiac. They had some vogue at one time, and my first introduction to them was through some Cyprus ones in very gaudy and ornate boxes which were sold by a Roumanian wine-waiter at Frascati's named Babu Jonsescu. He afterwards became rich and prosperous and latterly was involved in a much-published lawsuit, and he it was who

Reminiscences of an Epicure

handed out these cigarettes in company with Turkish coffee and rose water. Most exotic, in fact.

Where cheeks are tanned by an Eastern sun
And eyes have a Southern blue;
Where lips that are soft when the day is done
Unveiled turn to woo;

There rests my Love in her raiment white,
Her hair in the twilight gleams;
And Salonica's leaf in the scented night
Soothes with its summer-dreams.

And so I take her and closer hold,
And the western sun is set;
And my love is told as the clouds unfold—
For my love is a cigarette.

